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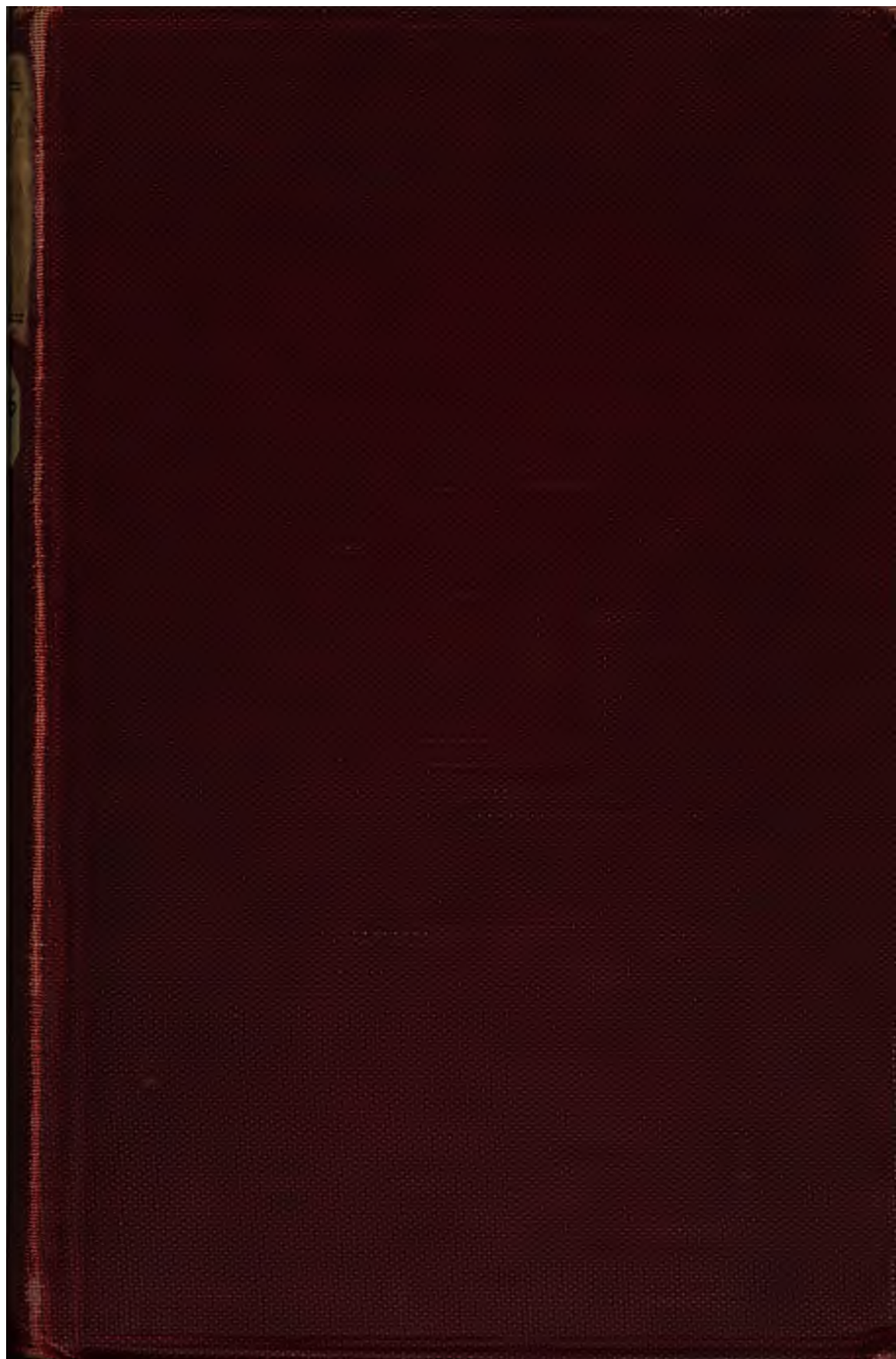
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## **A PILGRIMAGE OF PLEASURE**

*This Edition of "A Pilgrimage of Pleasure:  
Essays and Studies," by Algernon Charles Swin-  
burne is limited to 500 copies, printed from type.*

# A PILGRIMAGE OF PLEASURE

*ESSAYS AND STUDIES*

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

*WITH A BIBLIOGRAPHY*



RICHARD G. BADGER

*The Gorham Press*

BOSTON



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## CONTENTS

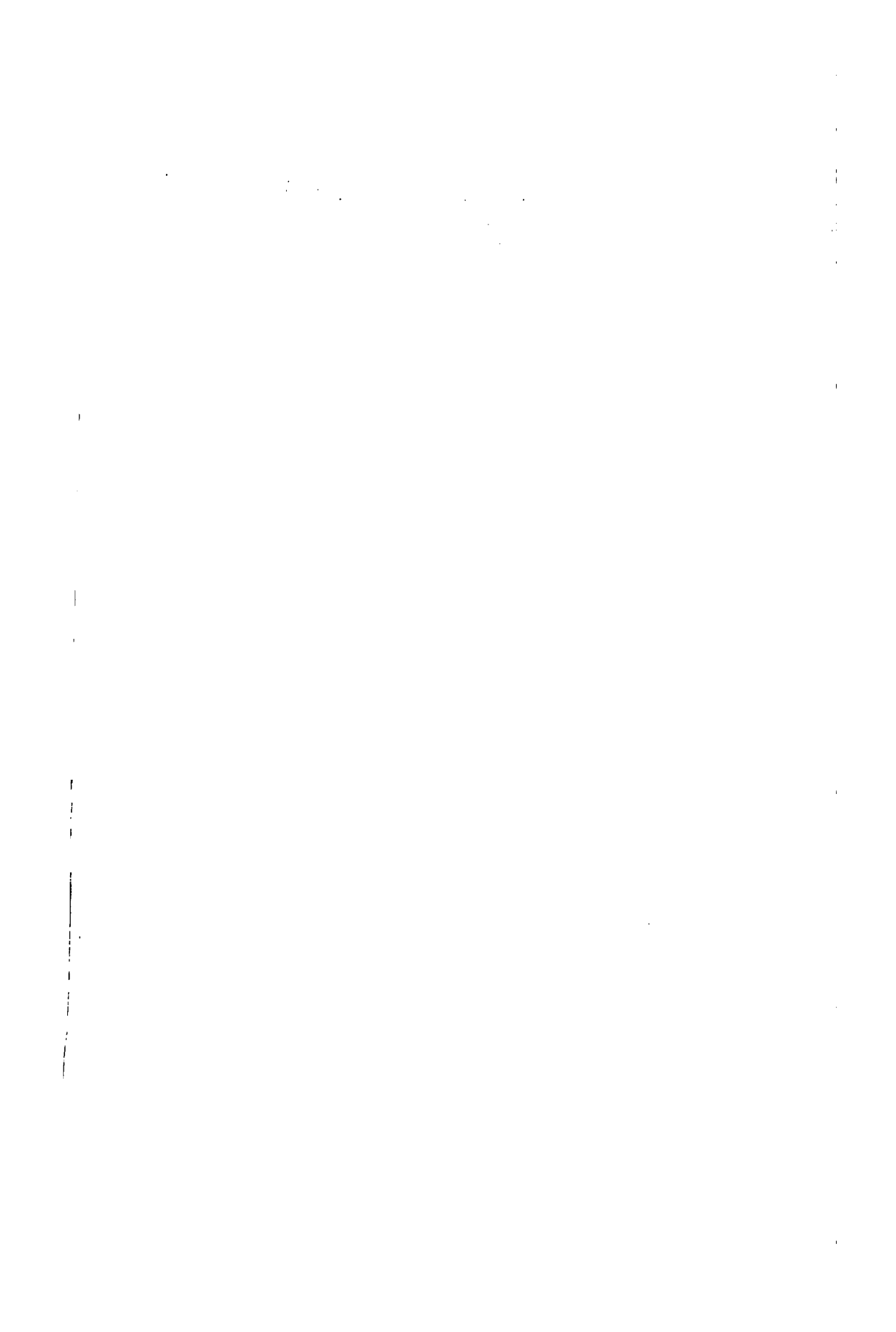
CHAPTER		PAGE
I	A PILGRIMAGE OF PLEASURE . . . . .	9 - <i>London 1921</i>
II	DEAD LOVE . . . . .	25 " "
III	CHARLES BAUDELAIRE: <i>Les Fleurs du Mal</i> . . .	85 <i>London 1913</i>
IV	SIMEON SOLOMON: NOTES ON HIS "VISION OF LOVE" AND OTHER STUDIES . . . . .	49 -
V	MR. GEORGE MEREDITH'S "MODERN LOVE" . . .	71 <i>London 1901</i>
VI	CHARLES DICKENS . . . . .	79 - <i>London 1913</i>
VII	AN UNKNOWN POET . . . . .	118
VIII	JOHN NICHOL'S "HANNIBAL" . . . . .	148
IX	A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE WORKS OF ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE, BY EDWARD J. O'BRIEN .	158



**I.**

**A PILGRIMAGE OF PLEASURE**

**1864**



# A PILGRIMAGE OF PLEASURE

## *Dramatis Personæ*

<i>Pleasure,</i>	<i>Gluttony, the Vice,</i>
<i>Youth,</i>	<i>Vain Delight,</i>
<i>Life,</i>	<i>Sapience</i>
<i>Discretion,</i>	<i>Death.</i>

*Pleasure.* All children of men, give good heed  
unto me,  
That am of my kind very virtue bodily,  
Turn ye from following of lies and Vain Delight  
That avaunteth herself there she hath but little  
right:  
Set your hearts upon goodly things that I shall  
you show,  
For the end of her ways is death and very woe.

*Youth.* Away from me, thou Sapience, thou  
noddy, thou green fool!  
What ween ye I be as a little child in school?  
Ye are as an old crone that moweth by a fire,  
A bob with a chestnut is all thine heart's desire.  
I am in mine habit like to Bacchus the high god,  
I reck not a rush of thy rede nor of thy rod.

*Life.* Bethink thee, good Youth, and take  
Sapience to thy wife,

For but a little while hath a man delight of Life.  
I am as a flame that lighteth thee one hour;  
She hath fruit enow, I have but a fleeting flower.

*Discretion.* For pity of Youth I may weep  
withouten measure,

That is gone a great way as pilgrim after Pleasure,  
For her (most bold queen) shall he never have in  
sight,

Who is bounden all about with bonds of Vain  
Delight.

That false fiend to follow in field he is full fain,  
For love of her sweet mouth he shall bide most  
bitter pain.

The sweeter she singeth, the lesser is her trust,  
She will bring him full low to deadly days and dust.

*Gluttony.* Ow, I am so full of flesh my skin  
goeth nigh to crack!

I would not for a pound I bore my body on my  
back.

I wis ye wot well what manner of man am I;

One of ye help me to a saddle by and bye.

I am waxen over-big, for I floter on my feet;

I would I had here a piece of beef, a worthy meat.

I have been a blubberling this two and forty year,

And yet for all this I live and make good cheer.

*Vain Delight.* I wot ye will not bite upon my  
snaffle, good Youth;

Ye go full smoothly now, ye amble well forsooth.

*Youth.* My sweet life and lady, my love and  
mine heart's lief,

One kiss of your fair sweet mouth it slayeth all  
men's grief.

One sight of your goodly eyes it bringeth all men ease.

*Gluttony.* Ow, I would I had a mancheth or a piece of cheese!

*Vain Delight.* Lo, where lurketh a lurden<sup>1</sup> that is kinsman of mine;

Ho, Gluttony, I wis ye are drunken without wine.

*Youth.* We have gone by many lands, and many grievous ways,

And yet have we not found this Pleasure all these days.

Sometimes a lightening all about her have we seen,  
A glittering of her garments among the fieldes green;

Sometimes the waving of her hair that is right sweet,

A lifting of her eyelids, or a shining of her feet,  
Or either in sleeping or in waking have we heard  
A rustling of raiment or a whispering of a word,  
Or a noise of pleasant water running over a waste place,

Yet have I not beheld her, nor known her very face.

*Vain Delight.* What, thou very knave, and how reckonest thou of me?

*Youth.* Nay, though thou be goodly, I trow thou art not she.

*Vain Delight.* I would that thou wert hanged in a halter by the neck,  
From my face to my feet there is neither flaw nor fleck,

<sup>1</sup> Lurden: a lout, lubber.



There is none happy man but he that sips and clips  
My goodly stately body and the love upon my lips.  
Great kings have worshipped me, and served me  
on their knees,

Yet for thy sake I wis, have I set light by these.

*Youth.* What pratest thou of Pleasure? I  
wot well it am I.

*Gluttony.* Ow! I would I had a marchpane or  
a plover in a pie!

What needeth a man look far for that is near at  
hand?

What needeth him ear the sea, or fish upon dry  
land?

For whether it be flesh, or whether it be fish,  
Lo, it lurketh full lowly in a little dish.

*Sapience.* I charge thee, O thou Youth, thou  
repent thee on this tide,

For but an hour or twain, shall thy life and thou  
abide;

Turn thee, I say, yea turn thee, before it be the  
night,

Take thine heart in thine hand, and slay thy Vain  
Delight,

Before thy soul and body in sudden and sunder be  
rent.

*Youth.* Nay, though I be well weary, yet will I  
not repent,

Nor will I slay my love; lo, this is all in brief.

*Vain Delight.* I beseech thee now begone, thou  
ragged hood, thou thief!

Wherefore snuffest thou so, like one smelling of  
mustard?

*Gluttony.* Ow, methinks I could eat a goodly quaking custard.

*Youth.* Peace, thou paunch, I pray; thou sayest ever the same.

*Vain Delight.* Lo, her coats be all bemired!  
this is a goodly dame,  
She pranceth with her chin up, as one that is full nice.

*Gluttony.* Ow, I would I had a pear with a pretty point of spice,  
A comfit with a caudle is a comfortable meat;  
A cony is the best beast of all that run on feet.  
I love well buttered ale, I would I had one drop;  
I pray thee, Mistress Sapience, hast thou never a sugar sop?

*Sapience.* Depart from me, thou sturdy swine,  
thou hast no part in me!

*Gluttony.* Ow, I wist well there was little fair fellowship in thee.  
Good Mistress Discretion, ye be both lief and fair,  
Of thy dish, I pray thee, some scrapings thou me spare.

*Discretion.* My dish, thou foolish beast, for thy mouth it is not meet;  
I feed on gracious thought, and on prayer that is most sweet,  
I eat of good desires, I drink good words for wine;  
Thou art fed on husks of death among the snouts of swine;  
My drink is clear contemplation, I feed on fasting hours,

I commune with the most high stars, and all the  
noble flowers,  
With all the days and nights, and with love that  
is their queen.

*Gluttony.* Ow, of this communication it reck-  
me never a bean!  
Shall one drink the night for wine, and feed upon  
the dawn?

Yet had I rather have in hand a cantle of brawn.  
*Sapience.* O Youth, wilt thou not turn thee,  
and follow that is right?

*Youth.* Nay, while I have my living, I forsake  
not Vain Delight.  
Till when my hairs are grey, I put her away from  
me.

*Vain Delight.* Nay, but in that day will I with-  
draw my face from thee.  
Out, out, mother mumble, thou art both rotten and  
raw.

*Gluttony.* I will reach thee, if I may, a buffet  
with my paw.

*Vain Delight.* What, wilt thou take my king-  
dom? have this for all thy pains.

*Gluttony.* Ow, I would I had a toast to butter  
with thy brains.

*Life.* Lo, this is the last time that ever we  
twain shall meet,  
I am lean of my body and feeble of my feet;  
My goodly beauty is barren, fruit shall it never  
bear,  
But thorns and bitter ashes that are cast upon  
mine hair;

My glory is all gone, and my good time overpast,  
Seeing all my beauty cometh to one colour at the  
last,

A deadly dying colour of a faded face.

I say to thee, repent thee; thou hast but little  
space.

*Youth.* What manner of man art thou? It  
seems thou hast seen some strife.

*Life.* I am thy body's shadow, and the likeness  
of thy life,

The sorrowful similitude of all thy sorrow and sin;  
Wherefore, I pray thee, open all thine heart and  
let me in,

Lest, if thou shut out good counsel, thou be thy-  
self shut out—

*Gluttony.* Ow, though I be lusty I have made  
them low to lout,

My lungs be broken in twain with running over  
fast,

With beating of their bodies mine own sides have  
I brast;

The heaving of mine heart it is a galling grief.

Ow, what makes thee so lean and wan? (*to Life*)

I trow thou lackest beef.

*Vain Delight.* How, what is this knave, trow?

*Youth.* He saith his name is Life.

*Vain Delight.* By the faith of my fair body I  
will give him grief to wife!

In his lips there is no blood, in his throat there is  
no breath.

Call ye this Life, by my hood? I think it be liker  
Death.

*Life.* It is thou, thou cursed witch, hast bereft  
me of mine ease,

That I gasp with my lips and halt upon my knees.

*Death.* Thou hast lived overlong without tak-  
ing thought for me;

Lo, here is now an end of thy Vain Delight and  
thee.

Thou that wert gluttonous shalt eat the dust for  
bread,

Thou that wearest gold shalt wear grass above  
thine head;

Thou that wert full big shalt be shrunken to a  
span,

Thou shalt be a loathly worm that wert a lordly  
man.

Thou that madest thy bed of silk shalt have a bed  
of mould,

Thou whom furs have covered shalt be clad upon  
with cold,

Thou that lovedst honey, with gall shalt thou be  
fed,

Thou that wert alive shalt presently be dead.

*Youth.* O strong Death! be merciful! I quake  
with dread of thee.

*Death.* Nay, thou hast dwelt long with Life;  
now shalt thou sleep with me.

*Gluttony.* Ow, ow, for very fear my flesh doth  
melt and dwindle,

My sides and my shanks be leaner than a spindle;  
Now foul fall his fingers that wound up the thread,  
Good Master Death, do me no hurt; I wis I am  
but dead.

Now may I drink my sobs, and chew upon my  
sighs,  
And feed my foolish body with the fallings of mine  
eyes.

*Vain Delight.* Mine eyes are turned to tears,  
my fair mouth filled with moan,  
My cheeks are ashen colour, I grovel and I  
groan,  
My love is turned to loathing, my day to a weary  
night,  
Now I wot I am not Pleasure, I am but Vain De-  
light!

*Youth.* O Death, show pity upon me, and  
spare me for a space.

*Death.* Nay, thou hast far to go; rise up, un-  
cover thy face.

*Youth.* O Death, abide for a little, but till  
it be the night.

*Death.* Nay, thy day is done; look up, there  
is no light.

*Youth.* O Death, forbear me yet till an hour  
be over and done.

*Death.* Thine hour is over and wasted; behold,  
there is no more sun!

*Youth.* Nay, Death, but I repent me.

*Death.* Here have thou this and hold.

*Youth.* O Death, thou art keen and bitter,  
thine hands are wonder-cold!

*Death.* Fare forth now without word, ye have  
tarried over measure.

*Youth.* Alas, that ever I went on Pilgrimage  
of Pleasure,

And wist not what she was; now am I the wearier  
wight.

Lo, this is the end of all, this cometh of Vain De-  
light!

*Death.* O foolish people! O ye that rejoice  
for a three days' breath,

Lift up your eyes unto me, lest ye perish: behold,  
I am Death!

When your hearts are exalted with laughter, and  
kindled with love as with fire,

Neither look ye before ye nor after, but feed and  
are filled with desire.

Lo, without trumpets I come: without ushers I  
follow behind:

And the voice of the strong men is dumb; and the  
eyes of the wise men are blind.

Your mouths were hot with meat, your lips were  
sweet with wine,

There was gold upon your feet, on your heads was  
gold most fine:

For blasts of wind and rain ye shook not neither  
shrunk,

Ye were clothèd with man's pain, with man's blood  
ye were drunk;

Little heed ye had of tears and poor men's  
sighs,

In your glory ye were glad, and ye glittered with  
your eyes.

Ye said each man in his heart, "I shall live and  
see good days."

Lo, as mire and clay thou art, even as mire on  
weary ways.

Ye said each man, "I am fair, lo, my life in me  
stands fast."

Turn ye, weep and rend your hair; what abideth at  
the last?

For behold ye are all made bare, and your glory  
is over and past.

Ye were covered with fatness and sleep; ye  
wallow'd to left and to right,

Now may ye wallow and weep: day is gone, and  
behold it is night!

With grief were all ye gotten, to bale were all ye  
born,

Ye are all as red leaves rotten, or as the beaten  
corn.

What will one of you say? had ye eyes and would  
not see?

Had ye harps and would not play? Yet shall ye  
play for me.

Had ye ears and would not hear? Had ye feet  
and would not go?

Had ye wits and would not fear? Had ye seed  
and would not sow?

Had ye hands and would not wring? Had ye  
wheels and would not spin?

Had ye lips and would not sing? was there no song  
found therein?

A bitter, a bitter thing there is comen upon you  
for sin.

Alas! your kingdom and lands! alas! your men  
and their might!

Alas! the strength of your hands and the days of  
your Vain Delight!



Alas! the words that were spoken, sweet words on  
a pleasant tongue!

Alas! your harps that are broken, the harps that  
were carven and strung!

Alas! the light in your eyes, the gold in your golden  
hair!

Alas! your sayings wise, and the goodly things ye  
ware!

Alas! your glory! alas! the sound of your names  
among men!

Behold, it is come to pass, ye shall sleep and arise  
not again.

Dust shall fall on your face, and dust shall hang  
on your hair;

Ye shall sleep without shifting of place, and shall  
be no more as ye were;

Ye shall never open your mouth; ye shall never lift  
up your head;

Ye shall look not to north or to south; life is done,  
and behold, ye are dead!

With your hand ye shall not threat; with your  
throat ye shall not sing.

Yea, ye that are living yet, ye shall each be a  
grievous thing.

Ye shall each fare under ground, ye shall lose both  
speech and breath;

Without sight ye shall see, without sound ye shall  
hear, and shall know I am Death.

EPILOGUE

*Spoken by Pleasure*

THE ending of Youth and of Vain Delight  
Full plainly here ye all have seen;  
Wherefore I pray you day and night,  
While winter is wan and summer is green,  
Ye keep the end hereof in sight,  
Lest in that end ye gather teen;  
And all this goodly Christmas light,  
Ye praise and magnify our Queen,  
Whiles that your lips have breath;  
And all your life-days out of measure,  
Serve her with heart's and body's treasure,  
And pray GOD give her praise and pleasure,  
Both of her life and death.



**II**

**DEAD LOVE**

**1862**



## DEAD LOVE

**A**BOUT the time of the great troubles in France, that fell out between the parties of Armagnac and of Burgundy, there was slain in a fight in Paris a follower of the Duke John, who was a good knight called Messire Jacques d'Aspremont. This Jacques was a very fair and strong man, hardy of his hands, and before he was slain he did many things wonderful and of great courage, and forty of the folk of the other party he slew, and many of these were great captains, of whom the chief and the worthiest was Messire Olivier de Bois-Percé; but at last he was shot in the neck with an arrow, so that between the nape and the apple the flesh was cleanly cloven in twain. And when he was dead his men drew forth his body of the fierce battle, and covered it with a fair woven cloak. Then the people of Armagnac, taking good heart because of his death, fell the more heavily upon his followers, and slew very many of them. And a certain soldier, named Amaury de Jacquville, whom they called Courtebarbe, did best of all that party; for, crying out with a great noise, "Sus, sus!" he brought up the men after him, and threw them forward into the hot part of the fighting, where there was a sharp clamour; and this Amaury, laughing and crying out as a man that took a great delight in such matters of war, made of himself more noise

with smiting and with shouting than any ten, and they of Burgundy were astonished and beaten down. And when he was weary, and his men had got the upper hand of those of Burgundy, he left off slaying, and beheld where Messire d'Aspremont was covered up with his cloak; and he lay just across the door of Messire Olivier, whom the said Jacques had slain, who was also a cousin of Amaury's. Then said Amaury:

"Take up now the body of this dead fellow, and carry it into the house; for my cousin Madame Yolande shall have great delight to behold the face of the fellow dead by whom her husband has got his end, and it shall make the tiding sweeter to her."

So they took up this dead knight Messire Jacques, and carried him into a fair chamber lighted with broad windows, and herein sat the wife of Olivier, who was called Yolande de Craon, and she was akin far off to Pierre de Craon, who would have slain the Constable. And Amaury said to her:

"Fair and dear cousin, and my good lady, we give you for your husband slain the body of him that slew my cousin; make the best cheer that you may, and comfort yourself that he has found a good death and a good friend to do justice on his slayer; for this man was a good knight, and I that have revenged him account myself none of the worst."

And with this Amaury and his people took leave of her. Then Yolande, being left alone, began at

first to weep grievously, and so much that she was heavy and weary; and afterward she looked upon the face of Jacques d'Aspremont, and held one of his hands with hers, and said:

"Ah, false thief and coward! it is great pity thou wert not hung on a gallows, who hast slain by treachery the most noble knight of the world, and to me the most loving and the faithfulest man alive, and that never did any discourtesy to any man, and was the most single and pure lover that ever a married lady had to be her knight, and never said any word to me but sweet words. Ah, false coward! there was never such a knight of thy kin."

Then, considering his face earnestly, she saw that it was a fair face enough, and by seeming the face of a good knight; and she repented of her bitter words, saying with herself:

"Certainly this one, too, was a good man and valiant," and was sorry for his death.

And she pulled out the arrow-head that was broken, and closed up the wound of his neck with ointments. And then beholding his dead open eyes, she fell into a great torrent of weeping, so that her tears fell all over his face and throat. And all the time of this bitter sorrow she thought how goodly a man this Jacques must have been in his life, who being dead had such power upon her pity. And for compassion of his great beauty she wept so exceedingly and long that she fell down upon his body in a swoon, embracing him, and so lay the space of two hours with her face against his; and being awaked she had no other



desire but only to behold him again, and so all that day neither ate nor slept at all, but for the most part lay and wept. And afterward, out of her love, she caused the body of this knight to be preserved with spice, and made him a golden coffin open at the top, and clothed him with the fairest clothes she could get, and had this coffin always by her bed in her chamber. And when this was done she sat down over against him and held his arms about her neck, weeping, and she said:

"Ah, Jacques! although alive I was not worthy, so that I never saw the beauty and goodness of your living body with my sorrowful eyes, yet now being dead, I thank God that I have this grace to behold you. Alas, Jacques! you have no right now to discern what things are beautiful, therefore you may now love me as well as another, for with dead men there is no difference of women. But, truly, although I were the fairest of all Christian women that now is, I were in nowise worthy to love you; nevertheless, have compassion upon me that for your sake have forgotten the most noble husband of the world."

And this Yolande, that made such complaining of love to a dead man, was one of the fairest ladies of all that time, and of great reputation; and there were many good men that loved her greatly, and would fain have had some favour at her hands; of whom she made no account, saying always, that her dead lover was better than many lovers living. Then certain people said that she was bewitched; and one of these was Amaury. And they would

have taken the body to burn it, that the charm might be brought to an end; for they said that a demon had entered in and taken it in possession; which she hearing fell into extreme rage, and said that if her lover were alive, there was not so good a knight among them, that he should undertake the charge of that saying; at which speech of hers there was great laughter. And upon a night there came into her house Amaury and certain others, that were minded to see this matter for themselves. And no man kept the doors; for all her people had gone away, saving only a damsel that remained with her; and the doors stood open, as in a house where there is no man. And they stood in the doorway of her chamber, and heard her say this that ensues:—

“O most fair and perfect knight, the best that ever was in any time of battle, or in any company of ladies, and the most courteous man, have pity upon me, most sorrowful woman and handmaid. For in your life you had some other lady to love you, and were to her a most true and good lover; but now you have none other but me only, and I am not worthy that you should so much as kiss me on my sad lips, wherein is all this lamentation. And though your own lady were the fairer and the more worthy, yet consider, for God’s pity and mine, how she has forgotten the love of your body and the kindness of your espousals, and lives easily with some other man, and is wedded to him with all honour; but I have neither ease nor honour, and yet I am your true maiden and servant.”

And then she embraced and kissed him many times. And Amaury was very wroth, but he refrained himself: and his friends were troubled and full of wonder. Then they beheld how she held his body between her arms, and kissed him in the neck with all her strength; and after a certain time it seemed to them that the body of Jacques moved and sat up; and she was no whit amazed, but arose up with him, embracing him. And Jacques said to her:

"I beseech you, now that you would make a covenant with me, to love me always."

And she bowed her head suddenly, and said nothing.

Then said Jacques:

"Seeing you have done so much for love of me, we twain shall never go in sunder: and for this reason has God given back to me the life of my mortal body."

And after this they had the greatest joy together, and the most perfect solace that may be imagined: and she sat and beheld him, and many times fell into a little quick laughter for her great pleasure and delight.

Then came Amaury suddenly into the chamber, and caught his sword into his hand, and said to her:

"Ah, wicked leman, now at length is come the end of thy horrible love and of thy life at once;" and smote her through the two sides with his sword, so that she fell down, and with a great sigh full unwillingly delivered up her spirit, which was no sooner fled out of her perishing body, but immedi-

ately the soul departed also out of the body of her lover, and he became as one that had been all those days dead. And the next day the people caused their two bodies to be burned openly in the place where witches were used to be burned: and it is reported by some that an evil spirit was seen to come out of the mouth of Jacques d'Aspremont, with a most pitiful cry, like the cry of a hurt beast. By which thing all men knew that the soul of this woman, for the folly of her sinful and most strange affection, was thus evidently given over to the delusion of the evil one and the pains of condemnation.



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III

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE: *LES*  
*FLEURS DU MAL*

1862



CHARLES BAUDELAIRE: *LES  
FLEURS DU MAL*

**I**T is now some time since France has turned out any new poet of very high note or importance; the graceful, slight, somewhat thin spun classical work of M. Théodore de Banville hardly carries weight enough to tell across the Channel; indeed, the best of this writer's books, in spite of exquisite humorous character and a most flexible and brilliant style, is too thoroughly Parisian to bear transplanting at all. French poetry of the present date, taken at its highest, is not less effectually hampered by tradition and the taste of the greater number of readers than our own is. A French poet is expected to believe in philanthropy, and break off on occasion in the middle of his proper work to lend a shove forward to some theory of progress. The critical students there, as well as here, judging by the books they praise and the advice they proffer, seem to have pretty well forgotten that a poet's business is presumably to write good verses, and by no means to redeem the age and remould society. No other form of art is so pestered with this impotent appetite for meddling in quite extraneous matters; but the mass of readers seem actually to think that a poem is the better for containing a moral lesson or assisting in a tangible and material good work. The courage and sense of a man who at such a



time ventures to profess and act on the conviction that the art of poetry has absolutely nothing to do with didactic matter at all, are proof enough of the wise and serious manner in which he is likely to handle the materials of his art. From a critic who has put forward the just and sane view of this matter with a consistent eloquence, one may well expect to get as perfect and careful poetry as he can give.

To some English readers the name of M. Baudelaire may be known rather through his admirable translations, and the criticisms on American and English writers appended to these, and framing them in fit and sufficient commentary, than by his volume of poems, which, perhaps, has hardly yet had time to make its way among us. That it will in the long run fail of its meed of admiration, whether here or in France, we do not believe. Impeded at starting by a foolish and shameless prosecution, the first edition was, it appears, withdrawn before anything like a fair hearing had been obtained for it. The book now comes before us with a few of the original poems cancelled, but with important additions. Such as it now is, to sum up the merit and meaning of it is not easy to do in a few sentences. Like all good books, and all work of any original savour and strength, it will be long a debated point of argument, vehemently impugned and eagerly upheld.

We believe that M. Baudelaire's first publications were his essays on the contemporary art of France, written now many years since. In these

early writings there is already such admirable judgment, vigour of thought and style, and appreciative devotion to the subject, that the worth of his own future work in art might have been foretold even then. He has more delicate power of verse than almost any man living, after Victor Hugo, Browning, and (in his lyrics) Tennyson. The sound of his metres suggests colour and perfume. His perfect workmanship makes every subject admirable and respectable. Throughout the chief part of this book, he has chosen to dwell mainly upon sad and strange things—the weariness of pain and the bitterness of pleasure—the perverse happiness and wayward sorrows of exceptional people. It has the languid lurid beauty of close and threatening weather—a heavy heated temperature, with dangerous hothouse scents in it; thick shadow of cloud about it, and fire of molten light. It is quite clear of all whining and windy lamentation; there is nothing of the blubbing and shrieking style long since exploded. The writer delights in problems, and has a natural leaning to obscure and sorrowful things. Failure and sorrow, next to physical beauty and perfection of sound or scent, seem to have an infinite attraction for him. In some points he resembles Keats, or still more his chosen favourite among modern poets, Edgar Poe; at times, too, his manner of thought has a relish of Marlowe, and even the sincerer side of Byron. From Théophile Gautier, to whom the book is dedicated, he has caught the habit of a faultless and studious simplicity; but, in-

deed, it seems merely natural to him always to use the right word and the right rhyme. How supremely musical and flexible a perfect artist in writing can make the French language, any chance page of the book is enough to prove; every description, the slightest and shortest even, has a special mark on it of the writer's keen and peculiar power. The style is sensuous and weighty; the sights seen are steeped most often in sad light and sullen colour. As instances of M. Baudelaire's strength and beauty of manner, one might take especially the poems headed *Le Masque*, *Parfum Exotique*, *La Chevelure*, *Les Sept Vieillards*, *Les Petites Vieilles*, *Brumes et Pluies*; of his perfect mastery in description, and sharp individual drawing of character and form, the following stray verses plucked out at random may stand for a specimen:—

"Sur ta chevelure profonde  
Aux âcres parfums,  
Mer odorante et vagabonde  
Aux flots bleus et bruns,

"Comme un navire qui s'éveille  
Au vent du matin,  
Mon âme rêveuse appareille  
Pour un ciel lointain.

"Tes yeux où rien ne se révèle  
De doux ni d'amer  
Sont deux bijoux froids où se mêle  
L'or avec le fer.

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“Et ton corps se penche et s’allonge  
Comme un fin vaisseau  
Qui roule bord sur bord et plonge  
Ses vergues dans l’eau.”

The whole poem is worth study for its vigorous beauty and the careful facility of its expression. Perhaps, though, the sonnet headed *Causerie* is a still completer specimen of the author's power. The way in which the sound and sense are suddenly broken off and shifted, four lines from the end, is wonderful for effect and success. M. Baudelaire's mastery of the sonnet form is worth remarking as a test of his natural bias towards such forms of verse as are most nearly capable of perfection. In a book of this sort, such a leaning of the writer's mind is almost necessary. The matters treated of will bear no rough or hasty handling. Only supreme excellence of words will suffice to grapple with and fitly render the effects of such material. Not the luxuries of pleasure in their simple first form, but the sharp and cruel enjoyments of pain, the acrid relish of suffering felt or inflicted, the sides on which nature looks unnatural, go to make up the stuff and substance of this poetry. Very good material they make, too; but evidently such things are unfit for rapid or careless treatment. The main charm of the book is, upon the whole, that nothing is wrongly given, nothing capable of being re-written or improved on its own ground. Concede the starting point, and you cannot have a better runner.

Thus, even of the loathsome bodily putrescence

and decay he can make some noble use; pluck out its meaning and secret, even its beauty, in a certain way, from actual carrion; as here, of the flies bred in a carcase.

"Tout cela descendait, montait comme une vague;  
 Ou s'élançait en pétillant.  
 On eût dit que le corps, enflé d'un souffle vague,  
 Vivait en se multipliant.

"Et ce monde rendait une étrange musique,  
 Comme l'eau courante et le vent,  
 Ou le grain qu'un vanneur d'un mouvement rythmique  
 Agite et tourne dans son van."

Another of this poet's noblest sonnets is that *A une Passante*, comparable with a similar one of Keats, "Time's sea hath been five years at its slow ebb," but superior for directness of point and forcible reality. Here for once the beauty of a poem is rather passionate than sensuous. Compare the delicate emblematic manner in which Keats winds up his sonnet to this sharp perfect finale:—

"Fugitive beauté  
 Dont le regard m'a fait soudainement renaître,  
 Ne te verrai-je plus que dans l'éternité?  
 Ailleurs, bien loin d'ici, trop tard! jamais peut-être!  
 Car j'ignore où tu fuis, tu ne sais où je vais,  
 O toi que j'eusse aimée, ô toi qui le savais!"

There is noticeable also in M. Baudelaire's work a quality of *drawing* which recalls the exquisite power in the same way of great French artists now living. His studies are admirable for truth and

grace; his figure-painting has the ease and strength, the trained skill, and beautiful gentle justice of manner, which come out in such pictures as the *Source* of Ingres, or that other splendid study by Flandrin, of a curled-up naked figure under full soft hot light, now exhibiting here.<sup>1</sup> These verses of Baudelaire's are as perfect and good as either.

“ . . . Tes sourcils méchants  
Te donnent un air étrange,  
Qui n'est part celui d'un ange,  
Sorcière aux yeux alléchants

“ Sur ta chair le parfum rôde  
Comme autour d'un encensoir;  
Tu charmes comme le soir,  
Nymphé ténébreuse et chaude.

“ Le désert et la forêt  
Embaument tes tresses rudes;  
Ta tête a les attitudes  
De l'énigme et du secret.

“ *Tes hanches sont amoureuses  
De ton dos et de tes seins,  
Et tu ravis les coussins  
Par tes poses langoureuses.*”

Nothing can beat that as a piece of beautiful drawing.

It may be worth while to say something about the moral and meaning of many among these poems. Certain critics, who will insist on going into this matter, each man as deep as his small

<sup>1</sup> Written in 1862.—Ed.

leaden plummet will reach, have discovered what they call a paganism on the spiritual side of this author's tone of thought. Stripped of its coating of jargon, this may mean that the poet spoken of endeavours to look at most things with the eye of an old-world poet; that he aims at regaining the clear and simple view of writers content to believe in the beauty of material subjects. To us, if this were the meaning of these people, we must say it seems a foolish one; for there is not one of these poems that could have been written in a time when it was not the fashion to dig for moral motives and conscious reasons. Poe, for example, has written poems without any moral meaning at all; there is not one poem of the *Fleurs du Mal* which has not a distinct and vivid background of morality to it. Only this moral side of the book is not thrust forward in the foolish and repulsive manner of a half-taught artist; the background, as we called it, is not out of drawing. If any reader could extract from any poem a positive spiritual medicine—if he could swallow a sonnet like a moral prescription—than clearly the poet supplying these intellectual drugs would be a bad artist; indeed, no real artist, but a huckster and vendor of miscellaneous wares. But those who will look for them may find moralities in plenty behind every poem of M. Baudelaire's; such poems especially as *Une Martyre*. Like a mediæval preacher, when he has drawn the heathen love, he puts sin on its right hand and death on its left. It is not his or any artist's business to warn against evil; but certainly he does not

exhort to it, knowing well enough that the one fault is as great as the other.

But into all this we do not advise any one to enter who can possibly keep out of it. When a book has been so violently debated over, so hauled this way and that by contentious critics, the one intent on finding that it means something mischievous, and the other intent on finding that it means something useful, those who are in search neither of a poisonous compound nor of a cathartic drug had better leave the disputants alone, or take only such notice of them as he absolutely must take. Allegory is the dullest game and the most profitless taskwork imaginable; but if so minded a reader might extract most elaborate meanings from this poem of *Une Martyre*; he might discover a likeness between the Muse of the writer and that strange figure of a beautiful body with the head severed, laid apart

"Sur la table de nuit comme une renoncule."

The heavy "mass of dark mane and heap of precious jewels" might mean the glorious style and decorative language clothing this poetry of strange disease and sin; the hideous violence wrought by a shameless and senseless love might stand as an emblem of that analysis of things monstrous and sorrowful, which stamps the whole book with its special character. Then again, the divorce between all aspiration and its results might be here once more given in type; the old question re-handled:—



"What hand and brain went ever paired?  
What heart alike conceived and dared?"

and the sorrowful final divorce of will from deed accomplished at last by force; and the whole thing summed up in that noble last stanza:—

"Ton époux court le monde; et ta forme immortelle  
Veille près de lui quand il dort;  
Autant que toi sans doute il te sera fidèle,  
Et constant jusque à la mort."

All this and more might be worked out if the reader cared to try; but we hope he would not. The poem is quite beautiful and valuable enough as merely the "design of an unknown master." In the same way one might use up half the poems in the book; for instance, those three beautiful studies of cats (fitly placed in a book that has altogether a feline style of beauty—subtle, luxurious, with sheathed claws); or such carefully tender sketches as *Le Beau Navire*; or that Latin hymn "Franciscae meae:"—

"Novis te cantabo chordis,  
O novelletum quod ludis  
In solitudine cordis.  
Esto sertis implicata,  
O fœmina delicata  
Per quam solvuntur peccata!"

Some few indeed, as that *ex-voto* poem *A une Madone*, appeal at once to the reader as to an interpreter; they are distinctly of a mystical moral turn, and in that rich symbolic manner almost unsurpassable for beauty.

"Avec mes Vers polis, treillis d'un pur métal  
Savamment constellé de rimes de cristal,  
Je ferai pour ta tête une énorme Couronne;  
Et dans ma Jalousie, ô mortelle Madone,  
Je saurai te tailler un manteau, de façon  
Barbare, roide et lourd et double de soupçon,  
Qui comme une guérite enfermera tes charmes;  
Non de Perles brodé, mais de toutes mes Larmes!  
Ta Robe, ce sera mon Désir, fremissant,  
Onduleux, mon Désir qui monte et qui descend,  
Aux pointes se suspend, aux vallons se repose,  
Et revêt d'un baiser tout ton corps blanc et rose."

Before passing on to the last poem we wish to indicate for especial remark, we may note a few others in which this singular strength of finished writing is most evident. Such are, for instance, *Le Cygne*, *Le Poison*, *Tristesses de la Lune*, *Remord Posthume*, *Le Flacon*, *Ciel Brouillé*, *Une Mendiante Rousse* (a simpler study than usual, of great beauty in all ways, noticeable for its revival of the old fashion of unmixed masculine rhymes), *Le Balcon*, *Allegorie*, *L'Amour et le Crâne*, and the two splendid sonnets marked xxvii. and xlii. We cite these headings in no sort of order, merely as they catch one's eye in revising the list of contents and recall the poems classed there. Each of them we regard as worth a separate study, but the *Litanies de Satan*, as in a way the key-note to this whole complicated tune of poems, we had set aside for the last, much as (to judge by its place in the book) the author himself seems to have done.

Here it seems as if all failure and sorrow on earth, and all the cast-out things of the world—

ruined bodies and souls diseased—made their appeal, in default of help, to Him in whom all sorrow and all failure were incarnate. As a poem, it is one of the noblest lyrics ever written; the sound of it between wailing and triumph, as it were the blast blown by the trumpets of a brave army in irretrievable defeat.

"O toi qui de la Mort, ta vieille et forte amante,  
Engendras l'Espérance—une folle charmante!  
O Satan, prends pitié de ma longue misère!  
Toi qui fais au proscrit ce regard calme et haut  
Qui damne tout un peuple autout d'un échafaud,  
O Satan, prends pitié de ma longue misère!

"Toi qui, magiquement, assouplis les vieux os  
De l'ivrogne attardé foulé par les chevaux,  
O Satan, prends pitié de ma longue misère!  
Toi qui, pour consoler l'homme frêle qui souffre,  
Nous appris à mêler le salpêtre et le soufre,  
O Satan, prends pitié de ma longue misère!"

These lines are not given as more finished than the rest; every verse has the vibration in it of naturally sound and pure metal. It is a study of metrical cadence throughout, of wonderful force and variety. Perhaps it may be best, without further attempts to praise or to explain the book, here to leave off, with its stately and passionate music fresh in our ears. We know that in time it must make its way; and to know when or how concerns us as little as it probably concerns the author, who can very well afford to wait without much impatience.

**IV**

**SIMEON SOLOMON**

**NOTES ON HIS "VISION OF LOVE" AND OTHER STUDIES**

**1871**



## SIMEON SOLOMON

### NOTES ON HIS "VISION OF LOVE" AND OTHER STUDIES

**I**F it may be said with perfect accuracy that in all plastic art, whether the language chosen be of words or forms, of sounds or colours, beauty is the only truth, and nothing not beautiful is true; yet this axiom of a great living artist and critic must not be so construed as to imply forgetfulness of the manifold and multiform nature of beauty. To one interpreter the terror or the pity of it, the shadow or the splendour, will appear as its main aspect, as that which gives him his fittest material for work or speech, the substance most pliable to his spirit, the form most suggestive to his hand; to another its simplicity or its mystery, its community or its specialty of gifts. Each servant serves under the compulsion of his own charm; each spirit has its own chain. Upon men in whom there is, so to speak, a compound genius, an intermixture of spiritual forces, a confluence of separate yet conspiring influences, diverse in source yet congruous in result—upon men in whose eyes the boundary lines of the several conterminous arts appear less as lines of mere distinction than as lines of mutual alliance—the impression of the mystery in all beauty, and in all defects that fall short of it, and in all excesses that overbear it, is likely to have a special hold.

The subtle interfusion of art with art, of sound with form, of vocal words with silent colours, is as perceptible to the sense and as inexplicable to the understanding of such men as the interfusion of spirit with flesh is to all men in common; and in fact when perceived of no less significance than this, but rather a part and complement of the same truth. One of such artists, and at once recognisable as such, is Mr. Simeon Solomon. There is not, for instance, more of the painter's art in the verse of Keats than of the musician's in Solomon's designs. As surely as the mystery of beauty—a mystery "most glad and sad" as Chaucer says of a woman's mouth—was done into colour of verse for ever unsurpassable in the odes "To a Nightingale" and on "Melancholy," so is the same secret wrought into perfect music of outline by the painter. The "unheard melodies," which Keats, with a sense beyond the senses, perceived and enjoyed in the forms of his Grecian urn, vibrate in the forms of this artist's handiwork; and all their lines and colours,

"Not to the sensual ear, but more endeared,  
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone."

Since the first years of his very early and brilliant celebrity as a young artist of high imaginative power and promise, Mr. Solomon has been at work long enough to enable us to define at least certain salient and dominant points of his genius. It holds at once of east and west, of Greek and Hebrew. So much indeed does this fresh inter-

fusion of influences give tone and shape to his imagination that I have heard him likened on this ground to Heine, as a kindred Hellenist of the Hebrews. Grecian form and beauty divide the allegiance of his spirit with Hebraic shadow and majesty: depths of cloud unsearchable and summits unsurmountable of fire darken and lighten before the vision of a soul enamoured of soft light and clear water, of leaves and flowers and limbs more lovely than these. For no painter has more love of loveliness; but the fair forms of godhead and manhood which in ancient art are purely and merely beautiful rise again under his hand with the likeness on them of a new thing, the shadow of a new sense, the hint of a new meaning; their eyes have seen in sleep or waking, in substance or reflection, some change now past or passing or to come; their lips have tasted a new savour in the wine of life, one strange and alien to the vintage of old; they know of something beyond form and outside of speech. There is a questioning wonder in their faces, a fine joy and a faint sorrow, a trouble as of water stirred, a delight as of thirst appeased. Always, at feast or sacrifice, in chamber or in field, the air and carriage of their beauty has something in it of strange: hardly a figure but has some touch, though never so delicately slight, either of eagerness or of weariness, some note of expectancy or of satiety, some semblance of outlook or inlook: but prospective or introspective, an expression is there which is not pure Greek, a shade or tone of thought or feeling



beyond Hellenic contemplation; whether it be oriental or modern in its origin, and derived from national or personal sources. This passionate sentiment of mystery seems at times to "o'erinform its tenement" of line and colour, and impress itself even to perplexity upon the sense of the spectator. The various studies, all full of subtleties and beauties definable and not definable, to which the artist has given for commentary the graceful mysticism of a symbolic rhapsody in prose, are also full to overflowing of such sentiment. Read by itself as a fragment of spiritual allegory, this written "Vision of Love revealed in Sleep" seems to want even that much coherence which is requisite to keep symbolic or allegoric art from absolute dissolution and collapse; that unity of outline and connection of purpose, that gradation of correlative parts and significance of corresponsive details, without which the whole aerial and tremulous fabric of symbolism must decompose into mere confusion of formless and fruitless chaos. Even allegory or prophecy must live and work by rule as well as by rapture; transparent it need not be, but it must be translucent. And translucent the fluctuating twilight of this rhapsody does become in time, with the light behind it of the designs; though at first it seems as hard to distinguish one incarnation of love or sleep or charity from the next following as to disentangle the wings and wheels of Ezekiel's cherubim, or to discover and determine the respective properties and qualities of Blake's "emanations"

and "spectres." The style is soft, fluent, genuinely melodious; it has nothing of inflation or constraint. There is almost a superflux of images full of tender colour and subtle grace, which is sure to lead the writer into some danger of confusion and repetition; and in such vague and uncertain ground any such stumbling-blocks are likely to be especial rocks of offence to the feet of the traveller. Throughout the whole there is as it were a suffusion of music, a transpiration of light and sound, very delicately and surely sustained. There are thoughts and fragments of thoughts, fancies and fantastic symbols, sometimes of rare beauty and singular force; in this for instance, of Night as a mother watching Sleep her child, there is a greater height and sweetness of imagination than in any but the sweetest and highest poetic allegories. "And she, to whom all was as an open scroll, wept when she looked upon him whose heart was as the heart of a little child." The depth and tenderness of this conception of Night, omniscient with the conscience of all things wrought under her shadow, world-wide of sight and sway, and wise with all the world's wisdom, weeping for love over the innocence of her first-born, is great and perfect enough for the noblest verse of a poet. The same affluence and delicacy of emblems interwoven with every part of the allegory is kept up from the first dawn of memory to the last transfiguration of love. There is an exquisite touch in the first vision of Memory standing by the sea-side with the shell held to her

ear whose voice "unburied the dead cycles of the soul," with autumn leaves showered on head and breast, "and upon her raiment small flecks of foam had already dried;" this last emblem of the salt small foam-flecks, sharp and arid waifs of the unquiet sea of life, light and bitter strays of barren thought and remembrance with the freshness dried out of them, is beautiful and new. Dim and vague as the atmosphere of such work should be, this vision would be more significant, and not less suggestive of things hidden in secret places of spiritual reserve, if it had more body of drawing, more shapeliness of thought and fixity of outline. Not that we would seek for solidity in shadow, or blame the beauty of luminous clouds for confusion of molten outlines; but even in cloud there is some law of form, some continuous harmony of line and mass, that only dissolves and changes "as a tune into a tune." To invigorate and support this fair frame of allegory there should be some clearer infusion of a purpose; there should be some thread of clearer connection, some filament, though never so slender, to link vision again to vision, some clue, "as subtle as Arachne's broken woof," to lead the reader's perception through the labyrinth of sounds and shapes. Each new revelation and change of aspect has beauty and meaning of its own; but even in a dream the steps of progress seem clearer than here, and the process from stage to stage of action or passion is ruled after some lawless law and irrational reason of its own. Such process as this at least we might hope to find

even in the records of allegoric vision; in this mystery or tragedy of the passion of a divine sufferer "wounded in the house of his friends" and bleeding from the hands of men, those who follow the track of his pilgrimage might desire at least to be shown the stations of his cross. We miss the thread of union between the varying visions of love forsaken and shamed, wounded and forgotten; of guileless and soulless pleasure in its naked and melodious maidenhood, and passion that makes havoc of love, and after that even of itself also; of death and silence, and of sleep and time. Many of these have in them the sweetness and depth of good dreams, and much subtle and various beauty; and had we but some clue to the gradations of its course, we might thread our way through the Dædalian maze with a free sense of gratitude to the artificer whose cunning reared it to hide no monstrous thing, but one of divine likeness. It might have been well to issue with the text some further reproductions of the designs: those especially of the wounded Love from whose heart's blood the roses break into blossom, of Desire with body and raiment dishevelled and deformed from self-inflicted strokes, of Divine Charity bearing Sleep down to the dark earth among men that suffer, of Love upborne by the strong arms and wings of Time, of the spirit that watches in the depth of its crystal sphere the mutable reflections of the world and the revolutions of its hidden things; all designs full of mystical attraction and passion, of bitter sweetness and burning beauty.

Outside the immediate cycle of this legend of love divine and human, the artist has done much other work of a cognate kind; his sketches and studies in this line have always the charm of a visible enjoyment in the vigorous indulgence of a natural taste and power. One of these, a noble study of "Sleepers and One that Watches," has been translated into verse of kindred strength and delicacy, in three fine sonnets of high rank among the clear-cut and exquisite "Intaglios" of Mr. John Payne. But the artist is not a mere cloud-compeller, a dreamer on the wing who cannot use his feet for good travelling purpose on hard ground; witness the admirable picture of Roman ladies at a show of gladiators, exhibited in 1865, which remains still his masterpiece of large dramatic realism and live imagination. All the heads are full of personal force and character, especially the woman's with heavy brilliant hair and glittering white skin, like hard smooth snow against the sunlight, the delicious thirst and subtle raving of sensual hunger for blood visibly enkindled in every line of the sweet fierce features. Mr. Solomon apparently has sufficient sense of physiology to share the theory which M. Alphonse Karr long since proposed to develop at length in a systematic treatise "*sur la ferocité des blondes.*" The whole spirit of this noble picture is imbued with the proper tragic beauty and truth and terror.

As the Hebrew love of dim vast atmosphere and infinite spiritual range without foothold on earth or resting-place in nature is perceptible in the

mystic and symbolic cast of so many sketches and studies, so is a certain loving interest in the old sacred forms, in the very body of historic tradition, made manifest in various more literal designs of actual religious offices. One series of such represents on a small scale, with singular force and refinement, the several ceremonies of the sacred seasons and festivals of the Jewish year. Other instances of this ceremonial bias towards religious forms of splendour or solemnity are frequent in the list of the painter's works; gorgeous studies of eastern priests in church or synagogue, of young saint and rabbi and Greek bishop doing their divine service in "full-blown dignity" of official magic. I remember faces among them admirable for holy heaviness of feature and sombre stolidity of sanctitude. No Venetian ever took truer delight in glorious vestures, in majestic embroideries, in the sharp deep sheen and glowing refraction of golden vessels; none of them ever lusted more hotly after the solid splendours of metal and marble, the grave glories of purple raiment and gleaming cup or censer. This same magnificence gives tone and colour to his classic subjects which explains their kinship to designs apparently so diverse in aim. Modern rather than classical, as we have noticed, in sentiment and significance, they combine the fervent violence of feeling or faith which is peculiar to the Hebrews with the sensitive acuteness of desire, the sublime reserve and balance of passion, which is peculiar to the Greeks. Something of Ezekiel is here

mixed with something of Anacreon; here the Anthology and the Apocalypse have each set a distinct mark: the author of the Canticles and the author of the Atys have agreed for a while to work together. The grievous and glorious result of aspiration and enjoyment is here legible; the sadness that is latent in gladness; the pleasure that is palpable in pain. Fixed eyes and fervent lips are full of divine disquiet and instinctive resignation. All the sorrow of the senses is incarnate in the mournful and melodious beauty of those faces; they have learnt to abstain from wishing; they are learning to abstain from hope. Especially in such works as the "Sappho" and the "Antinous" of some years since does this unconscious underlying sense assert itself. The wasted and weary beauty of the one, the faultless and fruitful beauty of the other, bear alike the stamp of sorrow; of perplexities unsolved and desires unsatisfied. They are not the divine faces familiar to us: the lean and dusky features of this Sappho are unlike those of her traditional bust, so clear, firm, and pure; this Antinous is rather like Ampelus than Bacchus. But the heart and soul of these pictures none can fail to recognise as right; and the decoration is in all its details noble and significant. The clinging arms and labouring lips of Sappho, her fiery pallor and swooning eyes, the bitter and sterile savour of subsiding passion which seems to sharpen the mouth and draw down the eyelids, translate as far as colour can translate her. The face and figure beside her are soulless and passive, the

beauty inert as a flower's; the violent spirit that aspires, the satisfied body that takes rest, are here seen as it were in types; the division of pure soul and of mere flesh; the powerful thing that lives without peace, and the peaceful thing that vegetates without power. In the "Sacrifice of Antinous," he officiates before the god under the divine disguise of Bacchus himself; the curled and ample hair, the pure splendour of faultless cheek and neck, the leopard-skin and thyrsus, are all of the god, and god-like; the mournful wonderful lips and eyes are coloured with mortal blood and lighted with human vision. In these pictures some obscure suppressed tragedy of thought and passion and fate seems latent as the vital veins under a clear skin. Intentionally or not as it may be, some utter sorrow of soul, some world-old hopelessness of heart, mixed with the strong sweet sense of power and beauty, has here been cast afresh into types. Elsewhere again, as in an earlier drawing which my remembrance makes much of, this dim tragic undertone is absent. The two ministering maidens in the Temple of Venus are priestesses of no sad god, preachers of no sad thing. They have not seen beyond the day's beauty, nor desired a delight beyond the hour's capacity to give. As the Epithalamium of Catullus to his Atys, so is this bright and sweet drawing to the Sappho. Here all is clear red and pale white, the serene and joyful colours of pure marble and shed rose-leaves: there dim green and shadows of dusky grey surround and sadden the



splendour of fair faces and bright limbs. This artist affects soft backgrounds of pale southern foliage and the sudden slim shoots of a light southern spring; these often give the keynote to his designs, always adding to them a general grace of shape and gravity of tone as unmistakable as any other special quality of work. But here nothing is deeper or darker than the fallen petals which spot the fair pavement of the temple. One girl, white-robed and radiant as white water-flowers, has half let fall the rose that droops in her hand, dropping leaf by leaf like tears; both have the languor and the fruitful air of flowers in a sultry place; their leaning limbs and fervent faces are full of the goddess; their lips and eyes allure and await the invisible attendant Loves. The clear pearl-white cheeks and tender mouths have still about them the subtle purity of sleep; the whole drawing has upon it the heavy incumbent light of summer but half awake. Nothing of more simple and brilliant beauty has been done of late years. Here the spirit of joy is pure and whole; but a spirit more common is that which foresees without eyes and forehears without ears the far-off features and the soundless feet of change; such a spirit as dictated the choice of subject in a picture of two young lovers in fresh fullness of first love crossed and troubled visibly by the mere shadow and the mere breath of doubt, the dream of inevitable change to come which dims the longing eyes of the girl with a ghostly foreknowledge that this too shall pass away, as with

arms half clinging and half repellent she seems at once to hold off and to hold fast the lover whose bright youth for the moment is smiling back in the face of hers—a face full of the soft fear and secret certitude of future things which I have tried elsewhere to render in the verses called “*Erotion*” written as a comment on this picture, with design to express the subtle passionate sense of mortality in love itself which wells up from “the middle spring of pleasure,” yet cannot quite kill the day’s delight or eat away with the bitter poison of doubt the burning faith and self-abandoned fondness of the hour; since at least, though the future be for others, and the love now here turn elsewhere to seek pasture in fresh fields from other flowers, the vows and kisses of these his present lips are not theirs but hers, as the memory of his love and the shadow of his youth shall be hers for ever.

In such designs the sorrow is simple as the beauty, the spirit simple as the form; in others there is all the luxury and mystery of southern passion and eastern dream. Many of these, as the figure bearing the eucharist of love, have a supersexual beauty, in which the lineaments of woman and of man seem blended as the lines of sky and landscape melt in burning mist of heat and light. Others, as the Bacchus, have about them a fleshly glory of godhead and bodily deity, which holds at once of earth and heaven; neither the mystic and conquering Indian is this god, nor the fierce choregus of Cithæron. The artist’s passionate love of gorgeous mysteries, “prodig-

ious mixtures and confusions strange" of sense and spirit no less than "of good and ill," has given him the will and the power to spiritualise at his pleasure, by the height and splendour of his treatment, the somewhat unspiritual memory of Helio-gabalus, "Emperor of Rome and High Priest of the Sun," symbolic in that strange union of offices at once of east and west, of ghostly glory and visible lordship, of the lusts of the flesh and the secrets of the soul, of the kingdom of this world and the mystery of another: the superb and luxurious power and subtlety of the study take in both aspects of his figure, the strangest surely that ever for an instant overtopped the world.

There is an entire class of Mr. Solomon's designs in which the living principle and moving spirit is music made visible. His groups of girls and youths that listen to one singing or reciting seem utterly imbued with the spirit of sound, clothed with music as with a garment, kindled and swayed by it as fire or as foliage by a wakening wind. In pictures where no one figures as making music, the same fine inevitable sense of song makes melodies of vocal colour and symphonies of painted cadence. The beautiful oil painting of bride, bridegroom, and paranymp has in its deep ripe tones the same suffusion of sound as that of the evening hymn to the hours; the colours have speech in them, a noble and solemn speech, and full of large strong harmonies. In the visible "mystery of faith" we feel the same mighty measures of a silent song go up with the elevation of

the host; and from the soundless lips of Love and Sleep, of Memory and of Dreams, of Pleasure and Lust and Death, the voice of their manifold mystery is audible.

In almost all of these there is perceptible the same profound suggestion of unity between opposites, the same recognition of the identity of contraries. Even in the gatherings of children about the knees of Love, as he tells his first tales to elder and younger lads and girls, there are touches of trouble and distraction, of faint doubt and formless pain on the fresh earnest faces that attend in wonder and in trance. Even in the glad soft grouping of boys and maidens by "summer twilight," under light bloom of branches that play against a gracious gleaming sky, their clear smiles and swift chance gestures recall some thought of the shadow as well as the light of life; and always there seems to rise up before the spirit, at thought of the might and ravage of time and "sad mortality," the eternal question—

"How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea,  
Whose action is no stronger than a flower?"

But far other questions than this rise up behind it, as we gaze into the great and terrible mystery of beauty, and turn over in thought the gloss of far other commentators, the scrolls of strange interpreters, materialist and mystic. In the features of these groups and figures which move and make music before us in the dumb show of lines and colours, we see the latent relations of pain and

pleasure, the subtle conspiracies of good with evil, the deep alliances of death and life, of love and hate, of attraction and abhorrence. Whether suffering or enjoyment be the master expression of a face, and whether that enjoyment or that suffering be merely or mainly spiritual or sensual, it is often hard to say—hard often to make sure whether the look of loveliest features be the look of a cruel or a pitiful soul. Sometimes the sensible vibration as of living lips and eyes lets out the secret spirit, and we see the springs of its inner and confluent emotions. The subtleties and harmonies of suggestion in such studies of complex or it may be perverse nature would have drawn forth praise and sympathy from Baudelaire, most loving of all students of strange beauty and abnormal refinement, of painful pleasures of soul and inverted raptures of sense. There is a mixture of utmost delicacy with a fine cruelty in some of these faces of fair feminine youth which recalls the explanation of a philosopher of the material school, whose doctrine is at least not without historic example and evidence to support it: “Une infinité de sots, dupes de cette incroyable sensibilité qu’ils voient dans les femmes, ne se doutent pas que les extrémités se rapprochent, et que c’est précisément au foyer de ce sentiment que la cruauté prend sa source. Parce que *la cruauté n’est elle-même qu’une des branches de la sensibilité*, et que c’est toujours en raison du degré dont nos âmes en sont pénétrées que les grandes horreurs se commettent.” The matter of this passage

is better than the style; by the presence of this element we may distinguish cruelty from brutality, a Nero from a Gallifet, a Brinvilliers from a "baby-farmer." In several of Mr. Solomon's designs we find heads emblematic of active or visionary passion upon which the seal of this sensitive cruelty is set; made beautiful beyond the beauty of serpent or of tiger by the sensible infusion of a soul which refines to a more delicate delight the mere nervous lust after blood, the mere physical appetite and ravenous relish for fleshly torture; which finds out the very "spirit of sense" and fine root of utmost feeling alike in the patient and the agent of the pain. There are no bestial faces, no mere vile types of brutality, but only of this cunning and cruel sensibility which catches fire from the stroke it deals, and drinks as its wine of life the blood of its sentient sacrifice. The poignancy of this pleasure is patent and fervent in the face of the fair woman overlooking the fresh full agony in the circus; the aftertaste of fierce weariness and bitter languor that corrodes the soul is perceptible in the aspect of the figure representing Lust, with haunted eyes and savage haggard lips and barren body scored with blood, in the allegoric design of Love. Other faces again are live emblems of an infinite tenderness, of sad illimitable pity, of the sweetness of utter faith and ardour that consumes all the meaner elements of life; the fiery passion and hunger after God of St. Theresa, who might be taken as patroness of the Christian side of this painter's art: one whole class of his religious de-

signs is impregnated with the burning mysticism and raging rapture of her visions, reflected as we feel them in Crashaw's hymn of invocation from the furnace of her own fierce words and phrases of prostrate ardour and amorous appeal to her Bridegroom.

All great and exquisite colourists have a mystery of their own, the conscience of a power known to themselves only as the heart knows its own bitterness, and not more communicable or explicable. In this case the pictorial power is so mixed with personal quality, so informed and infused with a subtle energy of sentiment, that a student from without may perhaps be able to note, not quite inaccurately or unprofitably, the main spiritual elements of the painter's work. In the work of some artists the sentiment is either a blank or a mist; and none but technical criticism of such work can be other than incompetent and injurious. The art of Mr. Solomon is of a kind which has inevitable attraction for artists of another sort, and is all the more liable to suffer from the verdicts of unskilled and untrained judgments. But an artist of his rank and quality has no need to cry out against the rash intrusion of critical stragglers from the demesne of any other art. He can afford the risk of such sympathies, for his own is rich in the qualities of those others also, in musical and poetic excellence not less positive than the pictorial; and as artist he stands high enough to be above all chance of the imputation cast on some that they seek comfort in the ignorant admiration

and reciprocal sympathy of men who cultivate some alien line of art, for conscious incompetence and failure in their own; fain to find shelter for bad painting under the plea of poetic feeling, or excuse for bad verse under the plea of good thought or sentiment. By right of his innate energies and actual performances, he claims kinship and alliance with the foremost in all fields of art, while holding in his own a special and memorable place. Withdrawn from the roll of artists, his name would leave a void impossible to fill up by any worthiest or ablest substitute; by any name of master in the past or disciple in the present or future. The one high test requisite for all genuine and durable honour is beyond all question his; he is himself alone, and one whose place no man can take. They only, but they assuredly, of whom this can be said, may trust in their life to come. Time wears out the names of the best imitators and followers; but he whose place is his own, and that place high among his fellows, may be content to leave his life's work with all confidence to time.





**V**

**MR. GEORGE MEREDITH'S "MODERN  
LOVE"**

**1862**



## MR. GEORGE MEREDITH'S "MODERN LOVE"

(Letter to the Editor of the *Spectator*.)

SIR,—I cannot resist asking the favour of admission for my protest against the article on Mr. Meredith's last volume of poems in the *Spectator* of May 24th.<sup>1</sup> That I personally have for the writings, whether verse or prose, of Mr. Meredith a most sincere and deep admiration is no doubt a matter of infinitely small moment. I wish only, in default of a better, to appeal seriously on general grounds against this sort of criticism as applied to one of the leaders of English literature. To any fair attack Mr. Meredith's books of course lie as much open as another man's; indeed, standing where he does, the very eminence of his post makes him perhaps more liable than a man of less well-earned fame to the periodical slings and arrows of publicity. Against such criticism no one would have a right to appeal, whether for his own work or for another's. But the writer of the article in question blinks at starting the fact that he is dealing with no unfledged pretender. Any work of a man who has won his spurs, and fought his way to a foremost place among the men of his time, must claim at least a grave consideration and re-

<sup>1</sup> 1862.—Ed.

spect. It would hardly be less absurd, in remarking on a poem by Mr. Meredith, to omit all reference to his previous work, and treat the present book as if its author had never tried his hand at such writing before, than to criticise the *Légende des Siècles*, or (coming to a nearer instance) the *Idylls of the King*, without taking into account the relative position of the great English or the greater French poet. On such a tone of criticism as this any one may chance to see or hear of it has a right to comment.

But even if the case were different, and the author were now at his starting-point, such a review of such a book is surely out of date. Praise or blame should be thoughtful, serious, careful, when applied to a work of such subtle strength, such depth of delicate power, such passionate and various beauty, as the leading poem of Mr. Meredith's volume: in some points, as it seems to me (and in this opinion I know that I have weightier judgments than my own to back me) a poem above the aim and beyond the reach of any but its author. Mr. Meredith is one of the three or four poets now alive whose work, perfect or imperfect, is always as noble in design as it is often faultless in result. The present critic falls foul of him for dealing with "a deep and painful subject on which he has no conviction to express." There are pulpits enough for all preachers in prose; the business of verse-writing is hardly to express convictions; and if some poetry, not without merit of its kind, has at times dealt in dog-

matic morality, it is all the worse and all the weaker for that. As to subject, it is too much to expect that all schools of poetry are to be forever subordinate to the one just now so much in request with us, whose scope of sight is bounded by the nursery walls; that all Muses are to bow down before her who babbles, with lips yet warm from their pristine pap, after the dangling delights of a child's coral; and jingles with flaccid fingers one knows not whether a jester's or a baby's bells. We have not too many writers capable of duly handling a subject worth the serious interest of men. As to execution, take almost any sonnet at random out of the series, and let any man qualified to judge for himself of metre, choice of expression, and splendid language, decide on its claims. And, after all, the test will be unfair, except as regards metrical or pictorial merit; every section of this great progressive poem being connected with the other by links of the finest and most studied workmanship. Take, for example, that noble sonnet, beginning

"We saw the swallows gathering in the skies,"

a more perfect piece of writing no man alive has ever turned out; witness these three lines, the grandest perhaps of the book:

"And in the largeness of the evening earth,  
Our spirit grew as we walked side by side;  
*The hour became her husband, and my bride;*"

but in transcription it must lose the colour and

effect given it by its place in the series; the grave and tender beauty, which makes it at once a bridge and a resting-place between the admirable poems of passion it falls among. As specimens of pure power, and depth of imagination at once intricate and vigorous, take the two sonnets on a false passing reunion of wife and husband; the sonnet on the rose; that other beginning:

"I am not of those miserable males  
Who sniff at vice, and daring not to snap,  
Do therefore hope for heaven."

And, again, that earlier one:

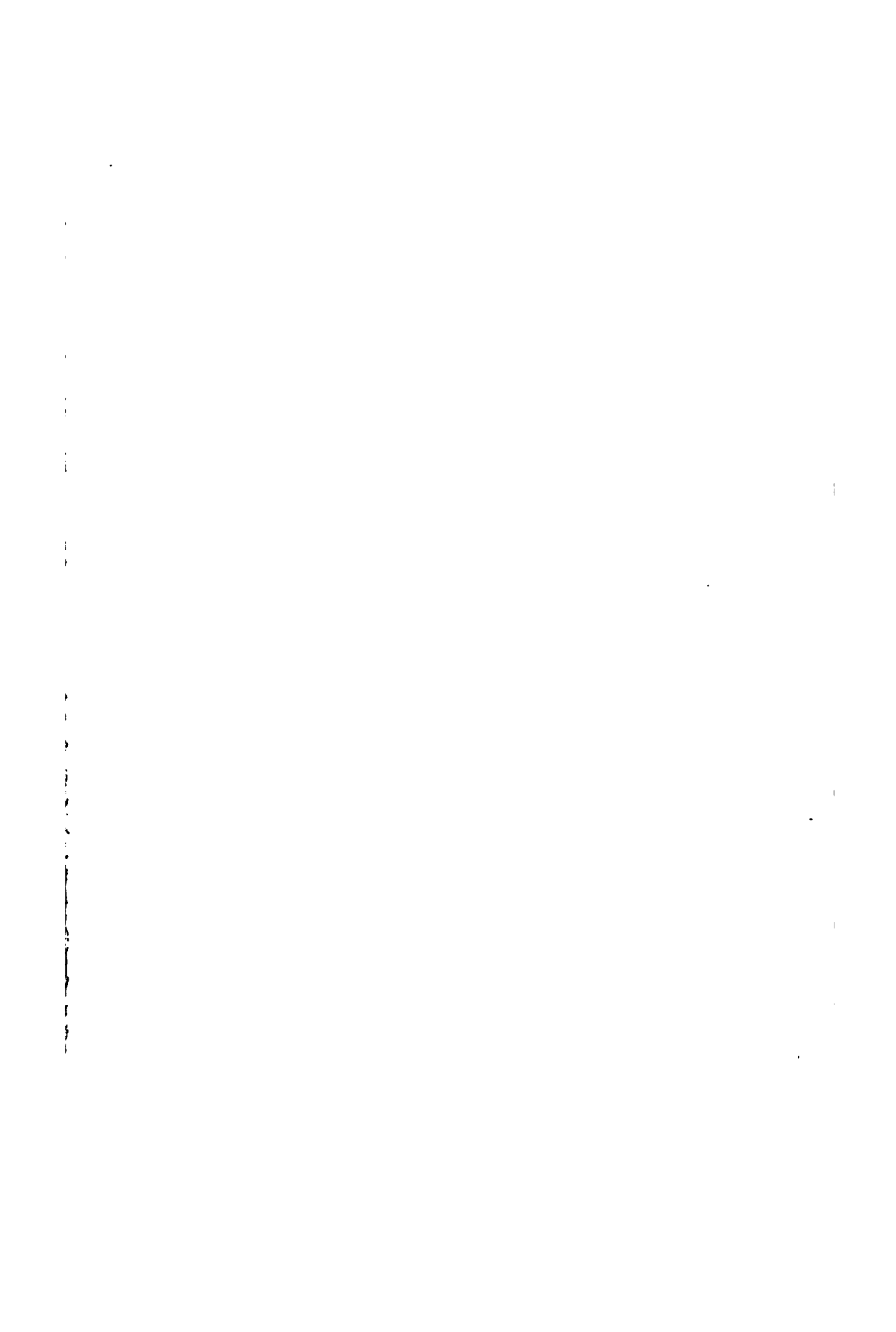
"All other joys of life he strove to warm."

Of the shorter poems which give character to the book I have not space to speak here; and as the critic has omitted noticing the most valuable and important (such as the "Beggar's Soliloquy," and the "Old Chartist," equal to Béranger for completeness of effect and exquisite justice of style, but noticeable for a thorough dramatic insight, which Béranger missed through his personal passions and partialities), there is no present need to go into the matter. I ask you to admit this protest simply out of justice to the book in hand, believing as I do that it expresses the deliberate unbiassed opinion of a sufficient number of readers to warrant the insertion of it, and leaving to your consideration rather their claims to a fair hearing than those of the book's author to a revised judg-

ment. A poet of Mr. Meredith's rank can no more be profited by the advocacy of his admirers than injured by the rash or partial attack of his critics.

A. C. SWINBURNE.





**VI**  
**CHARLES DICKENS**  
**1902**



## CHARLES DICKENS

**I**T is only when such names as Shakespeare's or Hugo's rise and remain as the supreme witnesses of what was highest in any particular country at any particular time that there can be any question among any but irrational and impudent men as to the supremacy of their greatest. England, under the reign of Dickens, had other great names to boast of which may well be allowed to challenge the sovereignty of his genius. But as there certainly was no Shakespeare and no Hugo to rival and eclipse his glory, he will probably and naturally always be accepted and acclaimed as the greatest Englishman of his generation. His first works or attempts at work gave little more promise of such a future than if he had been a Coleridge or a Shelley. No one could have foreseen what all may now foresee in the "Sketches by Boz"—not only a quick and keen-eyed observer, "a chiel amang us takin' notes" more notable than Captain Grose's, but a great creative genius. Nor could anyone have foreseen it in the early chapters of "Pickwick"—which, at their best, do better the sort of thing which had been done fairly well before. Sam Weller and Charles Dickens came to life together, immortal and twin-born. In "Oliver Twist" the quality of a great comic and tragic poet or dramatist in prose fiction

was for the first time combined with the already famous qualities of a great humourist and a born master in the arts of narrative and dialogue.

Like the early works of all other great writers whose critical contemporaries have failed to elude the kindly chance of beneficent oblivion, the early works of Dickens have been made use of to depreciate his later, with the same enlightened and impartial candour which on the appearance of "Othello" must doubtless have deplored the steady though gradual decline of its author's genius from the unfulfilled promise of excellence held forth by "Two Gentlemen of Verona." There may possibly be some faint and flickering shadow of excuse for the dullards, if unmalignant, who prefer "Nicholas Nickleby" to the riper and sounder fruits of the same splendid and inexhaustible genius. Admirable as it is, full of life and sap and savour, the strength and the weakness of youth are so singularly mingled in the story and the style that readers who knew nothing of its date might naturally have assumed that it must have been the writer's first attempt at fiction. There is perhaps no question which would more thoroughly test the scholarship of the student than this:—What do you know of Jane Dibabs and Horatio Peltiogrus? At fourscore and ten it might be thought "too late a week" for a reader to revel with insuppressible delight in a first reading of the chapters which enrol all worthy readers in the company of Mr. Vincent Crummles; but I can bear witness to the fact that this effect was

produced on a reader of that age who had earned honour and respect in public life, affection and veneration in private. It is not, on the other hand, less curious and significant that Sydney Smith, who had held out against Sam Weller, should have been conquered by Miss Squeers; that her letter, which of all Dickens's really good things is perhaps the most obviously imitative and suggestive of its model, should have converted so great an elder humourist to appreciation of a greater than himself; that the echo of familiar fun, an echo from the grave of Smollett, should have done what finer and more original strokes of comic genius had unaccountably failed to do. But in all criticism of such work the merely personal element of the critic, the natural atmosphere in which his mind or his insight works, and uses its faculties of appreciation, is really the first and last thing to be taken into account.

No mortal man or woman, no human boy or girl, can resist the fascination of Mr. and Mrs. Quilp, of Mr. and Miss Brass, of Mr. Swiveller and his Marchioness; but even the charm of Mrs. Jarley and her surroundings, the magic which enthralls us in the presence of a Codlin and a Short, cannot mesmerise or hypnotise us into belief that the story of "The Old Curiosity Shop" is in any way a good story. But it is the first book in which the background or setting is often as impressive as the figures which can hardly be detached from it in our remembered impression of the whole design. From Quilp's Wharf to Plashwater Weir Mill

Lock, the river belongs to Dickens by right of conquest or creation. The part it plays in more than a few of his books is indivisible from the parts played in them by human actors beside it or upon it. Of such actors in this book, the most famous as an example of her creator's power as a master of pathetic tragedy would thoroughly deserve her fame if she were but a thought more human and more credible. "The child" has never a touch of childhood about her; she is an impeccable and invariable portent of devotion, without a moment's lapse into the humanity of frailty in temper or in conduct. Dickens might as well have fitted her with a pair of wings at once. A woman might possibly be as patient, as resourceful, as indefatigable in well-doing and as faultless in perception of the right thing to do; it would be difficult to make her deeply interesting, but she might be made more or less of an actual creature. But a child whom nothing can ever irritate, whom nothing can ever baffle, whom nothing can ever misguide, whom nothing can ever delude, and whom nothing can ever dismay, is a monster as inhuman as a baby with two heads.

Outside the class which excludes all but the highest masterpieces of poetry it is difficult to find or to imagine a faultless work of creation—in other words, a faultless work of fiction; but the story of "Barnaby Rudge" can hardly, in common justice, be said to fall short of this crowning praise. And in this book, even if not in any of its precursors, an appreciative reader must recognise a quality

of humour which will remind him of Shakespeare, and perhaps of Aristophanes. The impetuous and irrepressible volubility of Miss Miggs, when once her eloquence breaks loose and finds vent like raging water or fire, is powerful enough to overbear for the moment any slight objection which a severe morality might suggest with respect to the rectitude and propriety of her conduct. It is impossible to be rigid in our judgment of "a toiling, moiling, constant-working, always-being-found-fault-with, never-giving-satisfactions, nor-having-no-time-to-clean-oneself, potter's wessel," whose "only becoming occupation is to help young flaunting pagins to brush and comb and titiwate themselves into whitening and suppulchres, and leave the young men to think that there an't a bit of padding in it nor no pinching-ins, nor fillings-out nor pomatums nor deceits nor earthly wanities." To have made malignity as delightful for an instant as simplicity, and Miss Miggs as enchanting as Mrs. Quickly or Mrs. Gamp, is an unsurpassable triumph of dramatic humour.

But the advance in tragic power is even more notable and memorable than this. The pathos, indeed, is too cruel; the tortures of the idiot's mother and the murderer's wife are so fearful that interest and sympathy are wellnigh superseded or overbalanced by a sense of horror rather than of pity; magnificent as is the power of dramatic invention which animates every scene in every stage of her martyrdom. Dennis is the first of those consummate and wonderful ruffians, with two vile



faces under one frowsy hood, whose captain or commander-in-chief is Rogue Riderhood; more fearful by far, though not (one would hope) more natural, than Henriet Cousin, who could hardly breathe when fastening the rope round Esmeralda's neck, "tant la chose l'apitoyait"; a divine touch of surviving humanity which would have been impossible to the more horrible hangman whose mortal agony in immediate prospect of the imminent gallows is as terribly memorable as anything in the tragedy of fiction or the poetry of prose. His fellow hangbird is a figure no less admirable throughout all his stormy and fiery career till the last moment; and then he drops into poetry. Nor is it poetry above the reach of Silas Wegg which "invokes the curse of all its victims on that black tree, of which he is the ripened fruit." The writer's impulse was noble; but its expression or its effusion is such as indifference may deride and sympathy must deplore. Twice only did the greatest English writer of his day make use of history as a background or a stage for fiction; the use made of it in "Barnaby Rudge" is even more admirable in the lifelike tragedy and the terrible comedy of its presentation than the use made of it in "A Tale of Two Cities."

Dickens was doubtless right in his preference of "David Copperfield" to all his other masterpieces; it is only among dunces that it is held improbable or impossible for a great writer to judge aright of his own work at its best, to select and to prefer the finest and the fullest example of his active genius;

but, when all deductions have been made from the acknowledgement due to the counter-claim of "Martin Chuzzlewit," the fact remains that in that unequal and irregular masterpiece his comic and his tragic genius rose now and then to the very highest pitch of all. No son of Adam and no daughter of Eve on this God's earth, as his occasional friend Mr. Carlyle might have expressed it, could have imagined it possible—for anything in later comedy to rival the unspeakable perfection of Mrs. Quickly's eloquence at its best; at such moments as when her claim to be acknowledged as Lady Falstaff was reinforced, if not by the spiritual authority of Master Dumb, by the correlative evidence of Mrs. Keech; but no reader above the level of intelligence which prefers to Shakespeare the Parisian Ibsen and the Norwegian Sardou can dispute the fact that Mrs. Gamp has once and again risen even to that unimaginable supremacy of triumph.

At the first interview vouchsafed to us with the adorable Sairey, we feel that no words can express our sense of the divinely altruistic and devoted nature which finds utterance in the sweetly and sublimely simple words—"If I could afford to lay all my feller creeturs out for nothink, I would gladly do it: sich is the love I bear 'em." We think of little Tommy Harris, and the little red worsted shoe gurgling in his throat; of the previous occasion when his father sought shelter and silence in an empty dog-kennel; of that father's immortally infamous reflection on the advent of

his ninth; of religious feelings, of life, and the end of all things; of Mr. Gamp, his wooden leg, and their precious boy; of her calculations and her experiences with reference to birth and death; of her views as to the expediency of travel by steam, which anticipated Ruskin's and those of later dissenters from the gospel of hurry and the religion of mechanism; of the contents of Mrs. Harris's pocket; of the incredible incredulity of the infidel Mrs. Prig; we think of all this, and of more than all this, and acknowledge with infinite thanksgiving of inexhaustible laughter and of rapturous admiration the very greatest comic poet or creator that ever lived to make the life of other men more bright and more glad and more perfect than ever, without his beneficent influence, it possibly or imaginably could have been.

The advance in power of tragic invention, the increased strength in grasp of character and grip of situation, which distinguishes Chuzzlewit from *Nickleby*, may be tested by comparison of the leading villains. Ralph Nickleby might almost have walked straight off the boards on which the dramatic genius of his nephew was employed to bring into action two tubs and a pump: Jonas Chuzzlewit has his place of eminence for ever among the most memorable types of living and breathing wickedness that ever were stamped and branded with immortality by the indignant genius of a great and unrelenting master. Neither *Vautrin* nor *Thénardier* has more of evil and of deathless life in him.

It is not only by his masterpieces, it is also by his inferior works or even by his comparative failures that the greatness of a great writer may be reasonably judged and tested. We can measure in some degree the genius of Thackeray by the fact that "Pendennis," with all its marvellous wealth of character and humour and living truth, has never been and never will be rated among his very greatest works. "Dombey and Son" cannot be held nearly so much of a success as "Pendennis." I have known a man of the very highest genius and the most fervent enthusiasm for that of Dickens who never could get through it. There is nothing of a story, and all that nothing (to borrow a phrase from Martial) is bad. The Roman starveling had nothing to lose, and lost it all: the story of Dombey has no plot, and that a very stupid one. The struttingly offensive father and his gushingly submissive daughter are failures of the first magnitude. Little Paul is a more credible child than Little Nell; he sometimes forgets that he is foredoomed by a more than Pauline or Calvinistic law of predestination to die in the odour of sentiment, and says or thinks or does something really and quaintly childlike. But we get, to say the least, a good deal of him; and how much too little do we get of Jack Bunsby! Not so very much more than of old Bill Barley; and yet those two ancient mariners are berthed for ever in the inmost shrine of our affections. Another patch of the very brightest purple sewn into the sometimes rather threadbare stuff or

groundwork of the story is the scene in which the dissolution of a ruined household is so tragicomically set before us in the breaking up of the servants' hall. And when we think upon the cherished names of Toots and Nipper, Gills and Cuttle, Rob the Grinder and good Mrs. Brown, we are tempted to throw conscience to the winds, and affirm that the book is a good book.

But even if we admit that here was an interlude of comparative failure, we cannot but feel moved to acclaim with all the more ardent gratitude the appearance of the next and perhaps the greatest gift bestowed upon us by this magnificent and immortal benefactor. "David Copperfield," from the first chapter to the last, is unmistakable by any eye above the level and beyond the insight of a beetle's as one of the masterpieces to which time can only add a new charm and an unimaginable value. The narrative is as coherent and harmonious as that of "Tom Jones"; and to say this is to try it by the very highest and apparently the most unattainable standard. But I must venture to reaffirm my conviction that even the glorious masterpiece of Fielding's radiant and beneficent genius, if in some points superior, is by no means superior in all. Tom is a far completer and more living type of gallant boyhood and generous young manhood than David; but even the lustre of Partidge is pallid and lunar beside the noontide glory of Micawber. Blifil is a more poisonously plausible villain than Uriah: Sophia Western remains unequalled except by her sister heroine Amelia

as a perfectly credible and adorable type of young English womanhood, naturally "like one of Shakespeare's women," socially as fine and true a lady as Congreve's Millamant and Angelica. But even so large-minded and liberal a genius as Fielding's could never have conceived any figure like Miss Trotwood's, any group like that of the Peggottys. As easily could it have imagined and realised the magnificent setting of the story, with its homely foreground of street or wayside and its background of tragic sea.

The perfect excellence of this masterpiece has perhaps done some undeserved injury to the less impeccable works of genius which immediately succeeded it. But in "*Bleak House*" the daring experiment of combination or alternation which divides a story between narrative in the third person and narrative in the first is justified and vindicated by its singular and fascinating success. "Esther's narrative" is as good as her creator's; and no enthusiasm of praise could overrate the excellence of them both. For wealth and variety of character none of the master's works can be said to surpass and few can be said to equal it. When all necessary allowance has been made for occasional unlikeliness in detail or questionable methods of exposition, the sustained interest and the terrible pathos of Lady Dedlock's tragedy will remain unaffected and unimpaired. Any reader can object that a lady visiting a slum in the disguise of a servant would not have kept jewelled rings on her fingers for the inspection of a crossing-

sweeper, or that a less decorous and plausible way of acquainting her with the fact that a scandalous episode in her early life was no longer a secret for the family lawyer could hardly have been imagined than the public narrative of her story in her own drawing-room by way of an evening's entertainment for her husband and their guests. To these objections, which any Helot of culture whose brain may have been affected by habitual indulgence in the academic delirium of self-complacent superiority may advance or may suggest with the most exquisite infinity of impertinence, it may be impossible to retort an equally obvious and inconsiderable objection.

But to a far more serious charge, which even now appears to survive the confutation of all serious evidence, it is incomprehensible and inexplicable that Dickens should have returned no better an answer than he did. Harold Skimpole was said to be Leigh Hunt; a rascal after the order of Wainwright, without the poisoner's comparatively and diabolically admirable audacity of frank and fiendish self-esteem, was assumed to be meant for a portrait or a caricature of an honest man and a man of unquestionable genius. To this most serious and most disgraceful charge, Dickens merely replied that he never anticipated the identification of the rascal Skimpole with the fascinating Harold—the attribution of imaginary villainy to the original model who suggested or supplied a likeness for the externally amiable and ineffectually accomplished loungee and shuffler through life. The simpler and

final reply should have been that indolence was the essential quality of the character and conduct and philosophy of Skimpole—"a perfectly idle man: a mere amateur," as he describes himself to the sympathetic and approving Sir Leicester; that Leigh Hunt was one of the hardest and steadiest workers on record, throughout a long and chequered life, at the toilsome trade of letters; and therefore that to represent him as a heartless and shameless idler would have been about as rational an enterprise, as lifelike a design after the life, as it would have been to represent Shelley as a gluttonous and canting hypocrite or Byron as a loyal and unselfish friend. And no one as yet, I believe, has pretended to recognise in Mr. Jarndyce a study from Byron, in Mr. Chadband a libel on Shelley.

Of the two shorter novels which would suffice to preserve for ever the fame of Dickens, some readers will as probably always prefer "Hard Times" as others will prefer "A Tale of Two Cities." The later of these is doubtless the most ingeniously and dramatically invented and constructed of all the master's works; the earlier seems to me the greater in moral and pathetic and humorous effect. The martyr workman, beautiful as is the study of his character and terrible as is the record of his tragedy, is almost too spotless a sufferer and a saint; the lifelong lapidation of this unluckier Stephen is somewhat too consistent and insistent and persistent for any record but that of a martyrology; but the obdurate and histrionic affectation which animates the brutality and stimulates the selfishness of



Mr. Bounderby is only too lamentably truer and nearer to the unlovely side of life. Mr. Ruskin—a name never to be mentioned without reverence—thought otherwise; but in knowledge and insight into character and ethics that nobly minded man of genius was no more comparable to Dickens than in sanity of ardour and rationality of aspiration for progressive and practical reform.

As a social satirist Dickens is usually considered to have shown himself at his weakest; the curious and seemingly incorrigible ignorance which imagined that the proper title of Sir John Smith's wife was Lady John Smith, and that the same noble peer could be known to his friends and parasites alternately as Lord Jones and Lord James Jones, may naturally make us regret the absence from their society of our old Parisian friend Sir Brown, Esquire; but though such singular designations as these were never rectified or removed from the text of "Nicholas Nickleby," and though a Lady Kew was as far outside the range of his genius as a Madame Marneffe, his satire of social pretension and pretence was by no means always "a swordstroke in the water" or a flourish in the air. Mrs. Sparsit is as typical and immortal as any figure of Molière's; and the fact that Mr. Sparsit was a Powler is one which can never be forgotten.

There is no surer way of testing the greatness of a really great writer than by consideration of his work at its weakest, and comparison of that comparative weakness with the strength of lesser

men at their strongest and their best. The romantic and fanciful comedy of "Love's Labour's Lost" is hardly a perceptible jewel in the sovereign crown of Shakespeare; but a single passage in a single scene of it—the last of the fourth act—is more than sufficient to outweigh, to outshine, to eclipse and efface forever the dramatic lucubrations and prescriptions of Dr. Ibsen—Fracastoro of the drama—and his volubly grateful patients. Among the mature works of Dickens and of Thackeray, I suppose most readers would agree in the opinion that the least satisfactory, if considered as representative of the author's incomparable powers, are "Little Dorrit" and "The Virginians"; yet no one above the intellectual level of an Ibsenite or a Zolaist will doubt or will deny that there is enough merit in either of these books for the stable foundation of an enduring fame.

The conception of "Little Dorrit" was far happier and more promising than that of "Dombey and Son"; which indeed is not much to say for it. Mr. Dombey is a doll; Mr. Dorrit is an everlasting figure of comedy in its most tragic aspect and tragedy in its most comic phase. Little Dorrit herself might be less untruly than unkindly described as Little Nell grown big, or in Milton's phrase, "writ large." But on that very account she is a more credible and therefore a more really and rationally pathetic figure. The incomparable incoherence of the parts which pretend in vain to compose the incomposite story may be

gauged by the collapse of some of them and the vehement hurry of cramped and halting invention which huddles up the close of it without an attempt at the rational and natural evolution of others. It is like a child's dissected map with some of the counties or kingdoms missing. Much, though certainly not all, of the humour is of the poorest kind possible to Dickens; and the reiterated repetition of comic catchwords and tragic illustrations of character is such as to affect the nerves no less than the intelligence of the reader with irrepressible irritation. But this, if he be wise, will be got over and kept under by his sense of admiration and of gratitude for the unsurpassable excellence of the finest passages and chapters. The day after the death of Mr. Merdle is one of the most memorable dates in all the record of creative history—or, to use one word in place of two, in all the record of fiction. The fusion of humour and horror in the marvellous chapter which describes it is comparable only with the kindred work of such creators as the authors of "*Les Misérables*" and "*King Lear*." And nothing in the work of Balzac is newer and truer and more terrible than the relentless yet not unmerciful evolution of the central figure in the story. The Father of the Marshalsea is so pitifully worthy of pity as well as of scorn that it would have seemed impossible to heighten or to deepen the contempt or the compassion of the reader; but when he falls from adversity to prosperity he succeeds in soaring down and sinking up to a more tragicomic igno-

miny of more aspiring degradation. And his end is magnificent.

It must always be interesting as well as curious to observe the natural attitude of mind, the inborn instinct of intelligent antipathy or sympathy, discernible or conjecturable in the greatest writer of any nation at any particular date, with regard to the characteristic merits or demerits of foreigners. Dickens was once most unjustly taxed with injustice to the French, by an evidently loyal and cordial French critic, on the ground that the one Frenchman of any mark in all his books was a murderer. The polypseudonomous ruffian who uses and wears out as many stolen names as ever did even the most cowardly and virulent of literary poisoners is doubtless an unlovely figure: but not even Mr. Peggotty and his infant niece are painted with more tender and fervent sympathy than the good Corporal and little Bebelles. Hugo could not—even omnipotence has its limits—have given a more perfect and living picture of a hero and a child. I wish I could think he would have given it as the picture of an English hero and an English child. But I do think that Italian readers of “*Little Dorrit*” ought to appreciate and to enjoy the delightful and admirable personality of Cavalletto. Mr. Baptist in Bleeding Heart Yard is as attractively memorable a figure as his excellent friend Signor Panco.

And how much more might be said—would the gods annihilate but time and space for a worthier purpose than that of making two lovers happy—

of the splendid successes to be noted in the least successful book or books of this great and inexhaustible writer! And if the figure or development of the story in "Little Dorrit," the shapeliness in parts or the proportions of the whole, may seem to have suffered from tight-lacing in this part and from padding in that, the harmony and unity of the masterpiece which followed it made ample and gorgeous amends. In "A Tale of Two Cities" Dickens, for the second and last time, did history the honour to enroll it in the service of fiction. This faultless work of tragic and creative art has nothing of the rich and various exuberance which makes of "Barnaby Rudge" so marvellous an example of youthful genius in all the glowing growth of its bright and fiery April; but it has the classic and poetic symmetry of perfect execution and of perfect design. One or two of the figures in the story which immediately preceded it are unusually liable to the usually fatuous objection which dullness has not yet grown decently ashamed of bringing against the characters of Dickens: to the charge of exaggeration and unreality in the posture or the mechanism of puppets and of daubs, which found its final and supremely offensive expression in the chattering duncery and the impudent malignity of so consummate and pseudosophical a quack as George Henry Lewes. Not even such a past-master in the noble science of defamation could plausibly have dared to cite in support of his insolent and idiotic impeachment either the leading or the supplementary characters in "A Tale

of *Two Cities*." The pathetic and heroic figure of Sydney Carton seems rather to have cast into the shade of comparative neglect the no less living and admirable figures among and over which it stands and towers in our memory. Miss Pross and Mr. Lorry, Madame Defarge and her husband, are equally and indisputably to be recognised by the sign of eternal life.

Among the highest landmarks of genius ever reared for immortality by the triumphant genius of Dickens, the story of "*Great Expectations*" must forever stand eminent beside that of "*David Copperfield*." These are his great twin masterpieces. Great as they are, there is nothing in them greater than the very best things in some of his other books: there is certainly no person preferable and there is possibly no person comparable to Samuel Weller or to Sarah Gamp. Of the two childish and boyish autobiographers, David is the better little fellow though not the more lifelike little friend; but of all first chapters is there any comparable for impression and for fusion of humour and terror and pity and fancy and truth to that which confronts the child with the convict on the marshes in the twilight? And the story is incomparably the finer story of the two; there can be none superior, if there be any equal to it, in the whole range of English fiction. And except in "*Vanity Fair*" and "*The Newcomes*," if even they may claim exception, there can surely be found no equal or nearly equal number of living and ever-living figures. The tragedy and the comedy, the

realism and the dreamery of life, are fused or mingled together with little less than Shakespearian strength and skill of hand. To have created Abel Magwitch is to be a god indeed among the creators of deathless men. Pumblechook is actually better and droller and truer to imaginative life than Pecksniff: Joe Gargery is worthy to have been praised and loved at once by Fielding and by Sterne: Mr. Jaggers and his clients, Mr. Wemmick and his parent and his bride, are such figures as Shakespeare, when dropping out of poetry, might have created, if his lot had been cast in a later century. Can as much be said for the creatures of any other man or god? The ghastly tragedy of Miss Havisham could only have been made at once credible and endurable by Dickens; he alone could have reconciled the strange and sordid horror with the noble and pathetic survival of possible emotion and repentance. And he alone could have eluded condemnation for so gross an oversight as the escape from retribution of so important a criminal as the "double murderer and monster" whose baffled or inadequate attempts are enough to make Bill Sikes seem comparatively the gentlest and Jonas Chuzzlewit the most amiable of men. I remember no such flaw in any other story I ever read. But in this story it may well have been allowed to pass unrebuked and unobserved: which yet I think it should not.

Among all the minor and momentary figures which flash into eternity across the stage of Dickens, there is one to which I have never yet seen

the tribute of grateful homage adequately or even decently paid. The sonorous claims of old Bill Barley on the reader's affectionate and respectful interest have not remained without response; but the landlord's Jack has never yet, as far as I am aware, been fully recognised as great among the greatest of the gods of comic fiction. We are introduced to this lifelong friend in a waterside public-house as a "grizzled male creature, the 'Jack' of the little causeway, who was as slimy and smeary as if he had been low watermark too." It is but for a moment that we meet him: but eternity is in that moment.

"While we were comforting ourselves by the fire after our meal, the Jack—who was sitting in a corner, and who had a bloated pair of shoes on, which he had exhibited, while we were eating our eggs and bacon, as interesting relics that he had taken a few days ago from the feet of a drowned seaman washed ashore—asked me if we had seen a four-oared galley going up with the tide? When I told him No, he said she must have gone down then, and yet she 'took up two,' when she left there.

" 'They must ha' thought better on't for some reason or another,' said the Jack, 'and gone down.'

" 'A four-oared galley, did you say?' said I.

" 'A four,' said the Jack, 'and two sitters.'

" 'Did they come ashore here?'

" 'They put in with a stone two-gallon jar for some beer. I'd ha' been glad to pison the beer



myself,' said the Jack, 'or put some rattling physic in it.'

" 'Why?'

" 'I know why,' said the Jack. He spoke in a slushy voice, as if much mud had washed into his throat.

" 'He thinks,' said the landlord, a weakly meditative man with a pale eye, who seemed to rely greatly on his Jack, 'he thinks they was, what they wasn't.'

" 'I knows what I thinks,' observed the Jack.

" 'You thinks Custom 'Us, Jack?' said the landlord.

" 'I do,' said the Jack.

" 'Then you're wrong, Jack.'

" 'AM I!'

"In the infinite meaning of his reply and his boundless confidence in his views, the Jack took one of his bloated shoes off, looked into it, knocked a few stones out of it on the kitchen floor, and put it on again. He did this with the air of a Jack who was so right that he could afford to do anything.

" 'Why, what do you make out that they done with their buttons then, Jack?' said the landlord, vacillating weakly.


" 'Done with their buttons?' returned the Jack. 'Chucked 'em overboard. Swallowed 'em. Sowed 'em, to come up small salad. Done with their buttons!'

" 'Don't be cheeky, Jack,' remonstrated the landlord, in a melancholy and pathetic way.

“ ‘A Custom ’Us officer knows what to do with his Buttons,’ said the Jack, repeating the obnoxious word with the greatest contempt, ‘when they comes betwixt him and his own light. A Four and two sitters don’t go hanging and hovering, up with one tide and down with another, and both with and against another, without there being Custom ’Us at the bottom of it.’ Saying which he went out in disdain.”

To join Francis the drawer and Cob the water-bearer in an ever-blessed immortality.

This was the author’s last great work: the defects in it are as nearly imperceptible as spots on the sun or shadows on a sunlit sea. His last long story, “Our Mutual Friend,” superior as it is in harmony and animation to “Little Dorrit” or “Dombey and Son,” belongs to the same class of piebald or rather skewbald fiction. As in the first great prose work of the one greater and far greater genius then working in the world the cathedral of Notre Dame is the one prevailing and dominating presence, the supreme and silent witness of life and action and passion and death, so in this last of its writer’s completed novels the real protagonist—for the part it plays is rather active than passive—is the river. Of a play attributed on the obviously worthless authority of all who knew or who could have known anything about the matter to William Shakespeare, but now ascribed on the joint authority of Bedlam and Hanwell to the joint authorship of Francis Bacon and John



Fletcher, assisted by the fraternal collaboration of their fellow-poets Sir Walter Raleigh and King James I, it was very unjustly said by Dr. Johnson that "the genius of the author comes in and goes out with Queen Katharine." Of this book it might more justly be said that the genius of the author ebbs and flows with the disappearance and the reappearance of the Thames.

That unfragrant and insanitary waif of its rottenest refuse, the incomparable Rogue Riderhood, must always hold a chosen place among the choicest villains of our selectest acquaintance. When the genius of his immortal creator said "Let there be Riderhood," and there was Riderhood, a figure of coequal immortality rose reeking and skulking into sight. The deliciously amphibious nature of the venomous human reptile is so wonderfully preserved in his transference from Southwark Bridge to Plashwater Weir Mill Lockhouse that we feel it impossible for imagination to detach the water-snake from the water, the water-rat from the mud. There is a horrible harmony, a hellish consistency, in the hideous part he takes in the martyrdom of Betty Higden—the most nearly intolerable tragedy in all the tragic work of Dickens. Even the unsurpassed and unsurpassable grandeur and beauty of the martyred old heroine's character can hardly make the wonderful record of her heroic agony endurable by those who have been so tenderly and so powerfully compelled to love and to revere her. The divine scene in the children's hospital is something that could only have been con-

ceived and that could only have been realised by two of the greatest among writers and creators: it is a curious and memorable thing that they should have shone upon our sight together.

We can only guess what manner of tribute Victor Hugo might have paid to Dickens on reading how Johnny "bequeathed all he had to dispose of, and arranged his affairs in this world." But a more incomparable scene than this is the resurrection of Rogue Riderhood. That is one of the very greatest works of any creator who ever revealed himself as a master of fiction; a word, it should be unnecessary to repeat, synonymous with the word creation. The terrible humour of it holds the reader entranced alike at the first and the hundredth reading. And the blatant boobies who deny truthfulness and realism to the imagination or the genius of Dickens, because it never condescended or aspired to wallow in metaphysics or in filth, may be fearlessly challenged to match this scene for tragicomic and everlasting truth in the work of Sardou or Ibsen, of the bisexual George Eliot or the masculine "Miss Mævia Mannish." M. Zola, had he imagined it, as undoubtedly his potent and indisputable genius might have done, must have added a flavour of blood and a savour of ordure which would hardly have gratified or tickled the nostrils and the palate of Dickens: but it is possible that this insular delicacy or prudery of relish and of sense may not be altogether a pitiable infirmity or a derisible defect. Every scene in which Mr. Inspector or Miss Abbey Potterson figures is

as lifelike as it could be if it were foul instead of fair—if it were as fetid with the reek of malodorous realism as it is fragrant with the breath of kindly and homely nature.

The fragmentary "Mystery of Edwin Drood" has things in it worthy of Dickens at his best: whether the completed work would probably have deserved a place among his best must always be an open question. It is certain that if Shakespeare had completed "The Two Noble Kinsmen"; if Hugo had completed "Les Jumeaux"; or if Thackeray had completed "Denis Duval," the world would have been richer by a deathless and a classic masterpiece. It is equally certain that the grim and tragic humours of the opium den and the boy-devil are worthy of the author of "Barnaby Rudge," that the leading villain is an original villain of great promise, and that the interest which assuredly, for the average reader, is not awakened in Mr. Drood and Miss Bud is naturally aroused by the sorrows and perils of the brother and sister whose history is inwoven with theirs. It is uncertain beyond all reach of reasonable conjecture whether the upshot of the story would have been as satisfactory as the conclusion, for instance, of "David Copperfield" or "Martin Chuzzlewit," or as far from satisfactory as the close of "Little Dorrit" or "Dombey and Son."

If Dickens had never in his life undertaken the writing of a long story, he would still be great among the immortal writers of his age by grace of his matchless excellence as a writer of short stories.

His earlier Christmas books might well suffice for the assurance of a lasting fame; and the best of them are far surpassed in excellence by his contributions to the Christmas numbers of his successive magazines. We remember the noble "Chimes," the delightful "Carol," the entrancing "Cricket on the Hearth," the delicious Tetterbys who make "The Haunted Man and the Ghost's Bargain" immortal and unghostly, and even the good stolid figure of Clemency Newcome, which redeems from the torpid peace of absolute nonentity so nearly complete a failure as "The Battle of Life"; but the Christmas work done for "Household Words" and "All the Year Round" is at its best on a higher level than the best of these. "The Wreck of the Golden Mary" is the work of a genius till then unimaginable—a Defoe with a human heart. More lifelike or more accurate in seamanship, more noble and natural in manhood, it could not have been if the soul of Shakespeare or of Hugo had entered into the somewhat inhuman or at least insensitive genius which begot Robinson Crusoe on Moll Flanders.

Among the others every reader will have his special favourites; I do not say his chosen favourites; he will not choose but find them; it is not a question to be settled by judgment but by instinct. All are as good of their kind as they need be: children and schoolboys, soldiers and sailors, showmen and waiters, landladies and cheap-jacks, signalmen and cellarmen: all of them actual and convincing, yet all of them sealed of the tribe of Dickens; real

if ever any figures in any book were real, yet as unmistakable in their paternity as the children of Chaucer, of Shakespeare, or of Fielding. A modest and honest critic will always, when dealing with questions of preference in such matters, be guided by the example of the not always exemplary Mr. Jingle—"not presume to dictate, but broiled fowl and mushrooms—capital thing!" He may in that case indicate his own peculiar addiction to the society of Toby Magsman and Mr. Chops, Captain Jorgan, Mr. Christopher (surely one of the most perfect figures ever drawn and coloured by such a hand as Shakespeare's or Dekker's or Sterne's or Thackeray's), Mrs. Lirriper and Major Jackman, Dr. Marigold, and Barbox Brothers. The incredible immensity, measurable by no critic ever born, of such a creative power as was needed to call all these into immortal life would surely, had Dickens never done any work on a larger scale of invention and construction, have sufficed for a fame great enough to deserve the applause and the thanksgiving of all men worthy to acclaim it, and the contempt of such a Triton of the minnows as Matthew Arnold. A man whose main achievement in creative literature was to make himself by painful painstaking into a sort of pseudo-Wordsworth could pay no other tribute than that of stolid scorn to a genius of such inexhaustible force and such indisputable originality as that of Charles Dickens. It is not always envy, I hope and believe, which disables and stupefies such brilliant and versatile examples of the minor poet and the

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minor critic when appreciation of anything new and great is found impossible for their self-complacent and self-centred understanding to attain. It is just that they cannot see high enough; they were born so, and will please themselves; as they do, and always did, and always will. And not even the tribute of equals or superiors is more precious and more significant than such disdain or such distaste as theirs.

These Christmas numbers are not, because of their small bulk, to be classed among the minor works of Dickens; they are gems as costly as any of the larger in his crown of fame. Of his lesser works the best and most precious is beyond all question or comparison "*The Uncommercial Traveller*"; a book which would require another volume of the same size to praise it adequately or aright. Not that there are not other short studies as good as its very best among the "reprinted pieces" which preserve for us and for all time the beloved figure of *Our Bore*, the less delightful figures of the noble savage and the begging-letter writer, the pathetic plaint of *Mr. Meek*, and the incomparable studies and stories of the detective police. We could perhaps dispense with "*Pictures from Italy*," and even with "*American Notes*," except for the delicious account or narrative or description of sea-sickness, which will always give such exquisite intensity of rapture to boys born impervious to that ailment and susceptible only of enjoyment in rough weather at sea as can hardly be rivalled by the delight of man or boy



in Mrs. Gamp herself. But there is only one book which I cannot but regret that Dickens should have written; and I cannot imagine what evil imp, for what inscrutable reason in the unjustifiable designs of a malevolent Providence, was ever permitted to suggest to him the perpetration of a "Child's History of England." I would almost as soon train up a child on Catholic or Calvinistic or servile or disloyal principles as on the cheap-jack radicalism which sees nothing to honour or love or revere in history, and ought therefore to confess that it can in reason pretend to see nothing on which to build any hope of patriotic advance or progressive endurance in the future.

A word may be added on the everlasting subject of editors and editions: a subject on which it really seems impossible that the countrymen of Shakespeare and of Dickens should ever be aroused to a sense that the matter is really worth care and consideration. Instead of reprinting the valuable and interesting prefaces written by Dickens for the first cheap edition of his collected works (a poor little double-columned reissue), the publishers of the beautiful and convenient Gadshill series are good enough to favour its purchasers with the prefatory importunities of a writer disentitled to express and disqualified to form an opinion on the work of an English humourist. The intrusive condescension or adulation of such a commentator was perhaps somewhat superfluous in front of the reprinted *Waverley Novels*; the offence becomes an outrage, the impertinence becomes impudence,

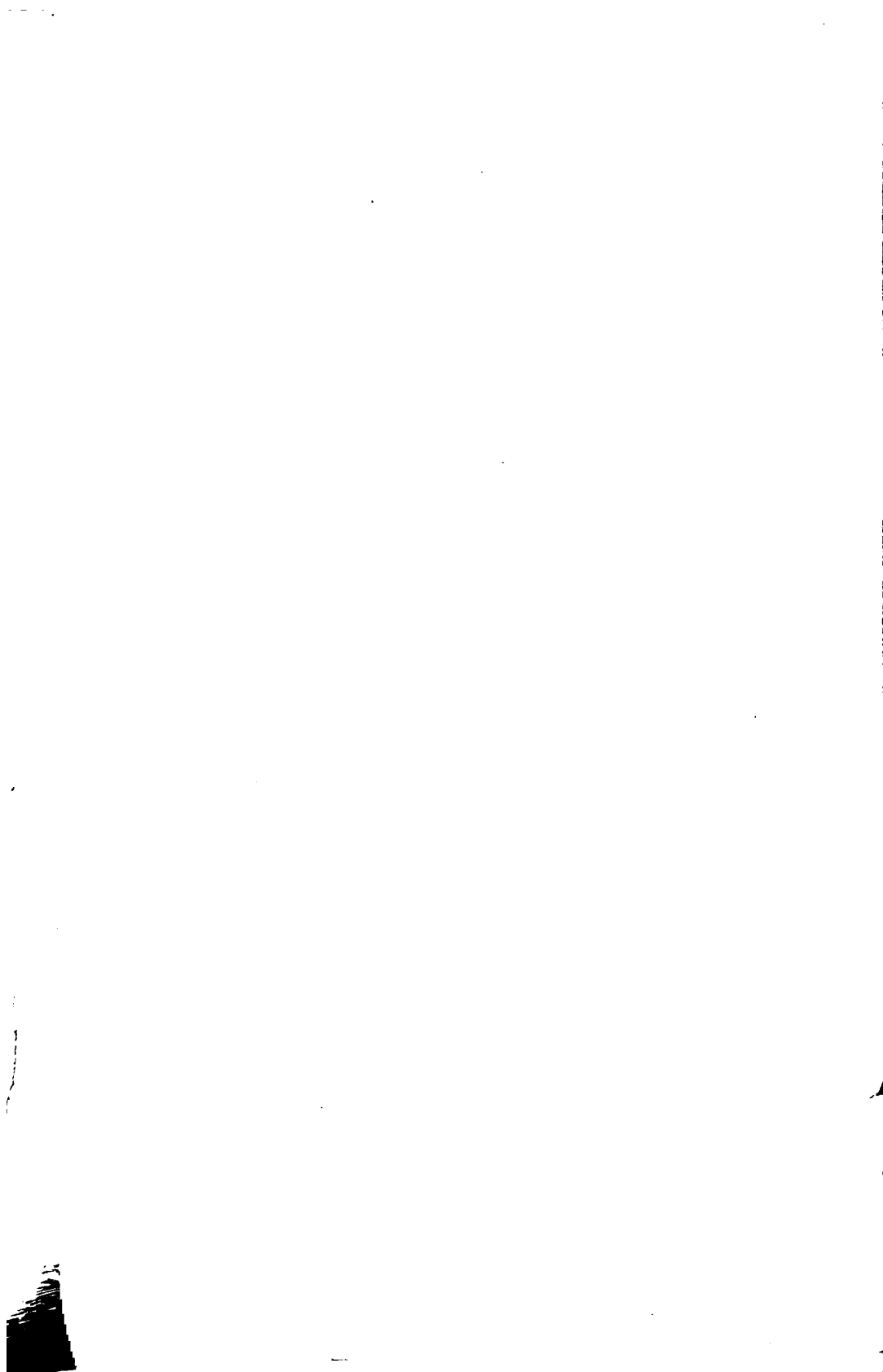
when such rubbish is shot down before the doorstep of Charles Dickens.

It is curious to compare the posthumous fortune of two such compeers in fame as Dickens and Thackeray. Rivals they were not and could not be: comparison or preference of their respective work is a subject fit only to be debated by the energetic idleness of boyhood. In life Dickens was the more prosperous: Thackeray has had the better fortune after death. To the exquisite genius, the tender devotion, the faultless taste and the unfailing tact of his daughter, we owe the most perfect memorial ever raised to the fame and to the character of any great writer on record by any editor or commentator or writer of prefaces or preludes to his work. A daughter of Dickens has left us a very charming little volume of reminiscences in which we enjoy the pleasure and honour of admission to his private presence: we yet await an edition of his works which may be worthy to stand beside the biographical edition of Thackeray's. So much we ought to have: we can demand and we can desire no more.



**VII**  
**AN UNKNOWN POET**

**1875**



## AN UNKNOWN POET

**I**T is said that all books find their level sooner or later; and indeed one would not willingly believe that anything of the highest worth can in the end be rejected by the judgment of men. Yet some great works there undoubtedly are which never seem likely to win their due place in general repute. How it is that they miss of fame it were hard to say; but some cross chance has nevertheless thrown them out of the straight way to it which we should have thought natural for them to take, and triumph; and time, that sets to right so much, forgets to settle their account with the celebrities and publicities of their day. Some books, like some men, seem to have come into the world with the brand of mischance on them for birthmark. Otherwise it would hardly be needful to refer any reader, at the distance of more than half a century, to an early sonnet of Keats for introduction to the name of Mr. Wells. This sonnet, written before the author's friend had himself come forward as a poet, remains almost the only indication extant, besides the all but forgotten existence of his own writings, that such a man was alive in that second golden age of English poetry which was comprised within the first quarter of the nineteenth century; unless the two or three yet fainter references to be found in the published correspondence of Keats be admitted as further evidence. But

about a year after the death of that poet a puny volume, hardly heavier than a pamphlet, labelled "Stories after Nature," was cast upon the waters of the world, which received it with unanimous neglect, and has not yet found it after these many days; to be followed in two years' time by a "Scriptural Drama," bearing the more decorous than attractive title of "Joseph and his Brethren," and issued under the pseudonym of H. L. Howard; with a preface dated from London, a motto taken from Milton, and two hundred and fifty-two pages of clear print. The book has long since sunk so far out of general sight that the evidence of such details is necessary to convince us that poem and poet are not as unsubstantial as the personality of the sponsor Howard, as undiscoverable as the reason which may have induced the author to prefer the anonymous form of venture for his first book, the pseudonymous for his second. Assuredly there was in his case no reason for fear or shame in the publication of work not unworthy of the time when England still held, or still divided with the land of Goethe, that place at the head of European literature which France was to assume and retain after the mighty movement of 1830. Yet, though there was proof enough in the latter of these two little books that a new poet was in the world, and one only lesser than the greatest of his time in some of the greatest qualities of his art, the critics of the minute could not even spare such notice to his work as they had accorded to that of Keats; not an owl thought it worth while to

stretch his throat, not an ass to lift up his heel against the workman. So the books vanished at once; and now only by such happy chance as sometimes may come to the help of assiduous research can they be dug up from the cemeteries of literature. At rare casual intervals some thin and reedy note of eulogy has been uttered over the grave of a noble poem, bewitched as it were to a sleep like death; and has always hitherto failed of a hearing. Nor did even the choice and eloquent words of praise bestowed on it by Mr. Rossetti in a supplementary chapter to Gilchrist's *Life of Blake* succeed in attracting the notice which Blake himself had not yet won from our generation. Notwithstanding, the truth remains, that the author of "*Joseph and his Brethren*" will some day have to be acknowledged among the memorable men of the second great period in our poetry.

The first publication of Mr. Wells, written it is said in his earliest youth, has much of the charm and something of the weakness natural to the first flight and the first note of a song-bird, whose wings have yet to grow, and whose notes have yet to deepen; yet in its first flutterings and twitterings there is a nameless grace, a beauty indefinable, which belongs only to the infancy of genius as it belongs only to the infancy of life. To a reader of the age at which this book was written it will seem—or so at least it seemed to me—"perfect in grace and power, tender and exquisite in choice of language, full of a noble and masculine delicacy in feeling and purpose"; and he will be ready to attribute



the utter neglect which has befallen it simply "to the imbecile caprice of hazard and opinion." Even then, however, he will perceive, if there be in him any critical judgment or any promise of such faculty to come, that the style of these stories is too near poetry to be really praiseworthy as prose; that they relish of a bastard graft; that they halt between two kinds of merit. At times they will seem to him almost to attain the standard of the Decameron; yet even he will remark that they want the direct aim and clear comprehension of story which are never wanting in Boccaccio. That perfect narrative power which sustains the most poetical stories even of the fifth day of the Decameron, keeping always in full view the simple prose of the event, is too often lacking here. And the youngest reader will probably take note that "there is a savour of impossibility (so to speak), a sort of incongruous beauty dividing the subject and the style, which removes the 'Stories after Nature' from our complete apprehension, and baffles the reader's delight in them"; that "even the license of a fairy tale is here abruptly leapt over; names and places are thrust in which perplex the very readiest belief even of that factitious kind which we may accord to things practically impossible: English kings and Tuscan dukes occupy the place reserved in the charity of our imaginations for kings of Lyonesse and princesses of Garba; the language also is often cast in the mould of Elizabethan convention; absolute Euphuism, with all its fantastic corruptions of style, breaks out and runs

rampant here and there; especially in a few of the more passionate speeches this starched ugliness of ruff and rebato will be felt to stiffen and deform the style of the same page which contains some of the sweetest and purest English ever written." On taking up the little book again in after years he will also discern the perceptible influence of Leigh Hunt in some of the stories; and that sweet and graceful essayist, much of whose critical work, and not a little of his poetical, retains its charm to this day, a soft light fragrance less evanescent than it seems, had set no good example in his short sentimental narratives for any pupil to follow. One or two at least of the younger poet's stories, had we found them in the *Indicator* or some other of Hunt's magazines, we should I think have set down as somewhat thin and empty samples of the editor's hastier work; in others there is a fresh and exquisite beauty which is due to no inspiration but his own.

But in whatever degree the undeniable presence of minor faults and mere stains of carelessness may excuse the neglect of Mr. Wells's prose stories, no such plea of passing defect can extenuate the scandal of the fact that to this day his great dramatic poem remains known perhaps on the whole to about half a dozen students of English art. As its extreme simplicity of design would make the analytic method of criticism here inapplicable, I shall merely attempt to give a slight practical taste of its quality by such excerpts as may seem to me likeliest or fittest to convey some adequate percep-

tion of the spirit and the style of a work in which the hardest things are done best, and the author's capacity of success expands with his occasion for it.

The poem opens with a chorus which in point of mere beauty of words and solemn power of cadence is as noticeable as any part of the book. Take the first lines as a sample:

"In the dim age when yet the rind of earth,  
Unworn by time, gave eager nature life,  
Zealous to furnish what the seasons wore  
That in a vigorous brightness flourishèd;  
When light and dark and constellations bright,  
The splendid sun, the silent gliding moon,  
Governed men's habits; taught them when to thrive,  
To rest, and sleep; till full of temperate years,  
Rude in their art, and ignorant of all  
Save passions and affections wild, untaught,  
They sank like giants in an earthy pit,  
Leaving the generation of their days  
'Twixt grief and reverence to mourn their loss  
And miss them from the village and the field;—  
God's voice (that mingled up the beauteous world,  
Inlaid pure heaven and sweetly coloured it;  
And with the wondrous magic of the clouds  
Enveils the sacred flooring evermore,  
Without bright golden, but within more rare)  
Was then upon the earth and with men's ears,  
Creating reverence and faith and love."

Notwithstanding the weakness and tenuity of workmanship noticeable in some of these verses, the whole overture has true dignity and simple harmony, of which we may take in witness another line or two.

"While the sun sinking from his daily round  
Had starred the heavens like a fiery flaw,  
Showing his glory greater than the west.  
. . . He was declined . . .  
A god gigantic habited in gold,  
Stepping from off a mount into the sea."

But the whole passage from which these verses are torn out is an example of nobly detailed description. About the slightest part of it there is a certain exaltation of style which supports the whole, even when there might seem an over simplicity or superfluity of verse.

The first part, ending with the sale of Joseph to the Midianites, is written throughout with a wonderful ease and stateliness of manner which recall the more equable cadences of Shakespeare. The pure dramatic quality is perhaps best shown in the characters of Reuben and Issachar, where the poet has found least material for his workmanship in the original story. Especially the rough spite of this latter, as deep and bitter as a cooler or more patient hatred could be, is so well given that his part stands out distinct in our memories till the end; the "strong ass," hard and blunt, readiest to strike and slowest to suffer. Jacob again is a clear and vigorous sketch; all excess of weakness has been avoided, and the baser aspect of age and fondness kept out of our thoughts. There is a genuine force of dramatic effect in his sudden appearance and upbraiding of the brothers.

"Come hither, Joseph. Up, my boy; ne'er weep.  
 Cast down the grapes, the fruits and figs you bear,  
 That were to sup their graceless hungry lips;  
 Down with them in the mire, close to their feet;  
 And, since they throw away the love of men  
 As 'twere but the condemnèd rind of life,  
 Like their own oxen let them stoop and feed,  
 Befitting their wild passions; for I swear,  
 Nought shall they eat or drink from off my board  
 Until the dawn; nor then unless their love  
 Becurd and thicken; and their anger melt  
 Like icicles away.

*Judah.*                      We grieve indeed

That you, so partial, stint us of your love.

*Jacob.* A lie! a lie! you envy this young slip.  
 Wilt thou teach me, thou climbing, scanty elm?

Me, who have kept my brow upon men's deeds  
 More than six times thine observation  
 (Being so much more thine age; six times as wise)?

Will you tell me your love degrades you thus?

. . . I have a fear of you;  
 For envy might lead men to cast poor stones  
 At heaven while it thunders; death waits on it;  
 On hatred still it feeds, and hideous dreams:

In meanness it begins; proceeds to blood;  
 And dies of sallow horror by itself."

And this of Joseph's, a little further on, has in it  
 a grand Elizabethan echo:—

"Would they be envious, let them then be great,  
 Envy old cities, ancient neighbourhoods,  
 Great men of trust and iron-crownèd kings;  
 For household envy is a household rat;

Envy of state a devil of some fear.  
E'en in my sleep my mind doth eat strange food,  
Enough to strengthen me against this hate."

But indeed all this scene is worth study for reserved power and exquisite expression. The next scene, though less effective at first sight, is well placed as an interlude of rest before the harsher action of the drama. From the scene in which Joseph is taken and sold, and the forged news of his death broken to his father, it is very difficult to break off any part as a specimen. We find throughout that high dramatic insight and delicate justice of arrangement which can only be understood by a straightforward reading. Such fragments as the following may be given in evidence of the author's subtle strength of style and command of sweet words; but their main merit is lost in the violence done to the context by extracting them.

**"Simeon.** Reuben, he doth contemn us of his birth;  
. . . . . he doth take  
A deep exception to our fellowship  
That was decreed him ere he was begot.  
Rachel (the beautiful, as she was called)  
Despised our mother Leah for that she  
Was tender-eyed, lean-favoured, and did lack  
The pulpy ripeness swelling the white skin  
To sleek proportions beautiful and round,  
With wrinkled joints so fruitful to the eye.

Her full dark eye, whose brightness silvered through  
The sable lashes soft as camel-hair;  
Her slanting head curved like the maiden moon

And hung with hair luxuriant as a vine  
 And blacker than a storm; her rounded ear  
 Turned like a shell upon some golden shore;

Her whispering foot that carried all her weight  
 Nor left its little pressure on the sand;  
 Her lips as drowsy poppies soft and red  
 Gathering a dew from her escaping breath:

Her neck o'ersoftened like to unsunned curd;  
 Her tapering fingers rounded to a point;  
 The silken softness of her veined hand;  
 Her dimpled knuckles answering to her chin;  
 And teeth like honeycombs o' the wilderness:  
 All these did tend to a bad proof in her."

There is something in this passage which recalls the luxury and exuberance, if not the vigour and concentration, of Marlowe's sweet and fiery raptures. As fine, but in another fashion, is the speech of Reuben which follows it; full of thought and pliant power compressed into brief grand words.

"For when an evil deed is thus abroad,  
 The will predominant the judgment blinds,  
 And he who seeks to lay it with advice  
 Feeds and provokes it. . . .  
 The will doth push itself beyond itself,  
 And full of madness doth provoke to ire  
 By its own act, to fret and carve a way  
 To all destruction. Mercy is but a spur  
 To goad on faster to its red design;  
 And sense feeds on the senses."

Verses as good as these might be gathered from all parts of the first act, especially in the scene

where Joseph is taken from the pit and offered to the merchants—

“Swarthy Egyptians, yellow as their gold,  
Riding on mules;”

a scene which abounds in passages fit for citation; for example, the description of the costly wares and trading life of the Ishmaelites; and later in the play we may note the imprecations of Reuben on the brethren (too much prolonged it may be, but rich in splendid verses and weighty turns of thought); the gradual breaking of the evil tidings to Jacob; and the lofty prelude-music of the chorus before the second act. But the crowning triumph of the poem is to be found there where the kernel of the whole story lies. Before giving any extracts from these central scenes, some rough summary must be given of the chief character in them as conceived by Mr. Wells.

Only once before had such a character been given with supreme success, and only by him who has given all things rightly, in whom there was no shadow of imperfection or failure. In the Cleopatra of Shakespeare and in the heroine of the present play there is the same imperious conscience of power by right of supreme beauty and supreme strength of will; the same subtle sweetness of speech; the same delicately rendered effect of perfection in word and gesture, never violated or made harsh even by extreme passion; the same evidence of luxurious and patient pleasure found in all things sensually pleasant; the same capacity of



bitter shame and wrath, dormant until the insult of resistance or rebellion has been offered; the same contemptuous incapacity to understand a narrower passion or a more external morality than their own; the same rapid and supple power of practical action. All women in literature after these two seem coarse or trivial when they touch on anything sensual; but in *their* passion there is nothing common or unclean; nothing paltry, no taint of vulgar sin or more vulgar repentance, can touch these two. And this the later poet, at least, has made out of the slightest and thinnest material possible; his original being not only insufficient—the very bare bones of conjecture, the suggestion of a skeleton character—but actually, as far as it was anything at all, so associated with ideas simply ludicrous and base that the very name of “Potiphar’s wife” has the sound of a coarse by-word.

To prove by detailed extracts the truth of what has been said is no light task within such limits as ours. Still it must surely be evident to any reader that the following is a noble and most dramatic opening, worthy of Shakespeare’s own art and judgment. Phraxanor enters laughing, and turns suddenly upon the steward:—

“I check in my laughter; dost thou notice it?  
Canst tell me why?”

*Joseph.*

Madam, I have not thought.

*Phraxanor.* Wert thou to guess on the left side of me  
Thou’dst wake the knowledge.

*Joseph.*

How so? I do not see.

*Phrazanor.* Because my heart doth grow on the left side.

. . . Ah me! alas!

My mirth was of my head, not of my heart,  
And mocked my patience.

*Joseph.* I am grieved at this.

*Phrazanor.* Nay, no physician e'er did heal a wound

By grieving at the hurt. Yet a white hand  
O'erspreaded with the tendril veins of youth  
Hath quieted a lady's gentle side,  
And taught her how to smile. . . .  
Thou dwell'dst at Canaan, said'st thou?

*Joseph.* Madam, I did.

*Phrazanor.* What kind of air?

*Joseph.* Warm and congenial.

*Phrazanor.* Indeed? I've generally heard that men  
Are favoured of the climate where they live.  
Bethink thee—surely our hot Egypt has  
Swolten thy recollection of the place.  
Thou'rt like a man that's nurtured upon ice,  
Fed with a spongy snow. . . .  
Congenial, said'st thou?—There's no drop that's warm  
Coursing another round those purple veins.  
Here, let me touch your hand; it is cold—cold—  
I've Egypt's sun in mine.

*Joseph.* Pure fire indeed.

You do mistake; my hand is not so cold;  
Though I confess I've known it warmer far,  
For I have struggled against heated blood  
And am proficient in forbearances.

*Phrazanor.* Indeed? are women's wits then merely dust

Blown by a puff of resolution  
Into their doting eyes?

*Joseph.* Wit is but air—

For dust the queen becomes; if she be good,  
She breaks to gold and diamond dust, past worth,

The proper metal of a perfect star;  
If she be not, embalming is no cure.

*Phrazanor.* Nay, throw aside

This ponderous mask of gravity you wear,  
Or give it me, and I will cast it forth  
To where my husband governs his affairs;  
It will not reach him, nor be recognised  
More than if he were blind. Come here, I say—  
Come here.

*Joseph.* What would you, madam? I attend.

*Phrazanor.* Why, put your fingers on my burning brow

That you have stirred into this quenchable heat,  
And touch the mischief that your eye has made—  
Do it, I say, or I will raise the house—  
Why, that is well. Now I will never say  
A sudden word to startle thee again,  
But use the gentlest breath a woman has.  
Aye, now you may remove your hand. Yet stay—  
I did not say withdraw it; you mistake;  
You are too jealous of the wondrous toy,  
Leave it with me and I will give you mine;  
I hold it as a bird that I do love,  
Yet fear to lose.—Fie on that steward's ring!  
Now, should it slip, it will fall in my neck."

Left alone, and foiled for a time, she questions  
thus with herself;

"Now should I be revenged of mine own face,  
And with my nails dig all this beauty out  
And pit it into honeycombs. Yet no;  
I will enjoy the air; feed daintily;  
Be bountiful in smiles; . . .  
For he who will not stoop him for desire  
Strides o'er that pity which is short of death.

Vaporous desire like a flame delayed  
Creeps in my pulses and babbles of its bounds  
Too mean, too limited a girth for it.  
Impatience frets me; yet I will be proud  
And muse upon the conquest ere 'tis won,  
For won it shall be. Oh dull Potiphar,  
To leave thy wife and travel for thy thrift  
While such a spirit tendeth here her wine.  
Ho, give me music there—play louder—so.”

The passion of these scenes is managed with such a noble temperance and so just an art, that a first reading even of the play in full, instead of those mangled extracts, plucked up almost at hazard, will hardly suffice to show the author's superb mastery of his own genius. Such wealth and such wisdom in the use of it, such luxury and such forbearance of style, are in the highest Elizabethan manner.

In the next scene Phraxanor reasons of love with an attendant, whose character, the very dimmest sketch possible, is designed seemingly as a relief to her own. There is a flavour of sentimental chastity in the few speeches allotted her which makes them feeble and flimsy enough; but this weak emptiness of the girl serves somehow to set off and exalt the splendid sensuous vigour of Phraxanor's share in the dialogue. Here again we can but give the opening, and a few more casual fragments. The scene is of some length, but throughout of solid and exquisite value.

*“Phraxanor.* Dost thou despise love then?

*Attendant.*

Madam, not quite:

A ruby that is pure is better worth  
 Than one that's flawed and streaked with the light;  
 So is a heart.

*Phrazanor.* A ruby that is flawed  
 Is better worth than one that's sunk a mile  
 Beneath the dry sand of some desert place;  
 So is a heart.

*Attendant.* Then, madam, you would say  
 That there is nothing in the world but love.

*Phrazanor.* Not quite; but I would say the fiery sun  
 Doth not o'ershine the galaxy so far; \*  
 Nor doth a torch within a jewelled mine  
 Amaze the eye beyond this diamond here  
 More than the ruddy offices of love  
 Do glow before the common steps of life."

This last has the absolute ring of Shakespeare;  
 "pure fire indeed." There are in the same scene  
 two magnificent passages of prolonged and subtle  
 rhetoric, finer perhaps as pieces of conscious and  
 imperious sophistry than anything in the way of  
 poetical reasoning that has since been done. The  
 first, a panegyric on love;

"Bravery of suits enriching the bright eye;  
 Sweetness of person; pleasure in discourse;  
 And all the reasons why men love themselves;  
 Nay, even high offices, renown and praise,  
 Greatness of name, honour of men's regard,  
 Power and state and sumptuous array,  
 Do pay a tribute at the lips of love.

Though but the footstool of a royal king,  
 When we betray and trip him to the earth  
 His crown doth roll beneath us. Horses have not  
 Such power to grace their lords or break their necks  
 As we, for we add passion to our power."

The second passage referred to is deeper in thought and more intricate in writing than any other speech in the play. It is a subtle plea in defence of inconstancy in women; this inconstancy, as governed and directed by art and practical skill, being (in the speaker's mind) the substitute for that laborious singleness of heart and devotion of the will to bare truth which make a man the stronger by nature of the two, but which a woman cannot (it is argued) attain or retain without violating her nature and abdicating her power upon man. Truth is indeed the grandest of abstractions:—

“Truth is sublime; the unique excellence;  
The height of wisdom, the supreme of power,  
The principle and pivot of the world,  
The keystone that sustains the archèd heavens;  
And Time, the fragment of Eternity,  
Eternity itself, but fills the scale  
In Truth's untrembling hand. His votaries  
Belong to him entire, not he to them;  
The immolation must be all complete,  
And woman still makes reservation.

. . . . .  
Our feeling, wench, is like the current coin,  
No counterfeit, for it doth bear our weight,  
The perfect image, absolute, enthroned;  
Now the king's coin belongs to many men  
And only by allowance is called his;  
Just so our feeling stands with circumstance.”

But the power to pierce through personal thought  
to absolute truth, the “reasoning imagination”  
proper to man,

"Is compromised in our maternal sex;  
Ours is a present, not an abstract power."

That is why art is wanted to make the balance  
sway back to the woman's side:

"If Art and Honesty do run a race,  
Which tumbles in the mire? ask those that starve.  
.  
.  
.  
Therefore since Truth requires that I should lay  
Me prostrate at her feet and worship her  
Rather than wield her sceptre and her power,  
I shall be bold to follow mine own way  
And use the world as I find wit and means;  
And as I know of nothing but old age,  
So nothing will I fear:—but I waste words  
You do not understand."

She then turns back the discourse to questions of  
love, handling (as it were) her own heart delicately,  
and weighing beforehand the power of her senses to bear pleasure.

"The sultry hour well suits occasion;  
That silk of gossamer like tawny gold—  
Throw it on loosely. . . .  
See to the neck; fit thou some tender lace  
About the rim. The precious jewel shown  
But scantily is oft desired most,  
And tender nets scare not the timid bird.  
A little secret is a tempting thing  
Beyond wide truth's confession. Give me flowers  
That I may hang them in my ample hair;  
And sprinkle me with lavender and myrrh.  
Zone me around with a broad chain of gold  
And wreath my arms with pearls. So—this will do."

Now at length, after all this noble repose of prep-

aration, Joseph enters with a message from his master. She fastens upon him at once.

*Phrazanor.* Put that to rest.  
Give me that golden box, there's ointment in it.

[*She spills it on his head.*]

*Joseph.* Madam, what must I say? My state is low,  
Yet you do treat me as you might my lord  
When he besought your hand.

*Phrazanor.* Must I get up  
And cast myself in your sustaining arms  
To sink you to a seat?—Come, sit—sit.  
Now I will neighbour you and tell you why  
I cast that ointment on you.

*Joseph.* I did not  
Desire it.

*Phrazanor.* You asked me for it.

*Joseph.* Madam?

*Phrazanor.* You breathed upon me as you did advance,  
And sweets do love sweets for an offering.  
My breath is sweet as subtle, yet I dared  
Not put my lips half close enough to thine  
To render back the favour: so I say  
The obligation did demand as much."

This scene is throughout managed with such supreme dexterity that one overlooks the almost ludicrous or repellent side of it, for which Mr. Wells is not responsible. The temptress here is not repulsive, and the hero is hardly ridiculous.

We continue our task of inadequate selection and enforced mutilation: let only the reader recollect that what appears here rough and imperfect is in the original smooth, just, and complete. Every precious thing here given is forcibly wrenched out of a setting not less precious.



*"Phrazanor.*

Listen to me, or else

I'll set my little foot upon thy neck.

. . . A poisoned cup

Might curdle all the features of thy face,

But this same blandishment upon my brow,

Could never chase the colour from thy cheeks.

. . . . .  
Contemptible darkness never yet did dull

The splendour of love's penetrating light.

At love's slight curtains that are made of sighs,

Though e'er so dark, silence is seen to stand

Like to a flower closed in the night.

. . . . .  
Pulses do sound quick music in love's ear,

And blended fragrance in his startled breath

Doth hang the hair with drops of magic dew.

All outward thoughts, all common circumstance,

Are buried in the dimple of his smile;

And the great city like a vision sails

From out the closing doors of the hushed mind.

His heart strikes audibly against his ribs

As a dove's wing doth freak upon a cage,

Forcing the blood athro' the cramped veins

Faster than dolphins do o'ershoot the tide

Coursed by the yawning shark. Therefore, I say,

Night-blooming Ceres, and the star-flower sweet,

The honeysuckle, and the eglantine,

And the ring'd vinous tree that yields red wine,

Together with all intertwining flowers,

Are plants most fit to ramble o'er each other

And form the bower of all-precious love,

Shrouding the sun with fragrant bloom and leaves

From jealous interception of love's gaze.

. . . . .  
Henceforth I'll never knit with glossèd bone,

But interlace my fingers around thine,

And ravel them, and interlace again,

So that no work that's done content the eye,  
That I may never weary in my work.

Beware! you'll crack my lace.

*Joseph.* You will be hurt.

*Phrazanor.* O for some savage strength!

*Joseph.* Away! Away!

*Phrazanor.* So you are loose—I pray you kill me—do.

*Joseph.* Let me pass out at door.

*Phrazanor.* I have a mind  
You shall at once walk with those honest limbs  
Into your grave."

The quiet heavy malice of that is as worthy of  
Shakespeare as the elaborate and faultless music  
of the passage on love. By way of reply to all  
this Joseph sums up the benefits he has received  
at the hands of Potiphar; ending thus:

"Madam! this man  
Into whose noble and confiding breast  
I will not thrust a vile ensanguined hand  
To tear from thence a palpitating heart,  
Is your most honourable lord and mine.

[*She stamps her foot.*

*Phrazanor.* Leap to thy feet, I say, unless thou wouldst  
Set up to be the universal fool.

Thou art right well enamoured of this lord—  
'My lord'—'my lord'—canst thou not ever mouth  
That word distinctly from 'my lady'? out on  
'My lord'! he surely shall be paid full home  
That honours lords above a lady's love.  
Thou hast no lord but me—I am thy lord—  
And thou shalt find it too; fool that I was

To stoop my stateliness to such a calf  
Because he bore about a panther's hide!

Were't not that royalty has kissed my hand  
I'd surely strike thee.

*Joseph.* Madam! be temperate.

*Phrazanor.* Dost thou expect to live!—

Who bade thee speak? impudent slave, beware!

Thou shalt be whipped. . . .

Disgrace to Egypt and her burning air!

Thou shalt not stay in Egypt.

*Joseph.* I grieve at that.

*Phrazanor.* I'm changed. Thou shalt stay here—and since

I see

There is no spirit of life in all this show,

Only a cheat unto the sanguine eye,

Thou shalt be given to the leech's hands

To study causes on thy bloodless heart

Why men should be like geese. . . .

. . . These knees,

That ne'er did bend but to pluck suitors up

And put them out of hope—Oh, I am mad!

These feet by common accident have trod

On better necks than e'er bowed to the king,

And must I tie them in a band of list

Before a slave like thee?

*Joseph.* Still I look honestly.

*Phrazanor.* Thy looks are grievous liars, like my eyes;

They juggled me to think thou wert a man.

If seeming make men, thou art one indeed.

Seeming, forsooth! Why, what hadst thou to do,

When thou might'st feast thy lips on my eye-lids,

To hang thy head o'er thy left shoulder thus—

Blinking at honesty? . . .

. . . Thou Honesty!

Show me thy proper pet, that when one such

In all her soberness may meet my eye,  
I may prepare to burn her with my gaze.

Soft! what a fool am I to rave about!  
I have mistook my passion all this while;  
Thou implement of honesty, it is  
Not scorn but laughter that is due to thee.  
I'll keep thee as an antic, that when dull  
Thou may'st kill heavy time.

Dry as a wild boar's tongue in honesty—  
And yet that hath an essence tending to  
Its savage growth. Thou shock of beaten corn!  
Thou hollow pit, lacking a goodly spring!  
Tempting the thirsty soul to come and drink,  
Then cheating him with dust and barrenness—  
Thou laughable affectation of man's form!  
. . . Are all those Canaanites  
Like you? ha?

*Joseph.* An they were, 'twere no disgrace.

*Phrazanor.* I'll prick my arm and they shall suck the blood  
To make men of them. . . .  
Ah thou poor temperate and drowsy drone!  
You empty glass! you balk to eyes, lips, hands!  
Ha, ha! I will command the masons straight  
Hew you in stone and set you on the gate  
Hard by the public walk where dames resort;  
Therein you shall fool more admiring eyes  
(A plague upon these embers in my throat),  
For you fooled mine, and I like company.

*Joseph.* You do me bitter wrong—unladylike—

A scourgeable, a scarlet-hooded wrong,  
When thus you pack my shoulders with your shame.

*Phrazanor.* Ha! have I touched thee? art thou sensible?  
I prithee do not fret, my pretty lute,  
I shall shed tears, sweet music, if thou fret.

Thou shalt be free like a rare charmed snake  
 To range a woman's secret chamber through.  
 Here, take my mantle, gird it o'er thy loins,  
 And steep thy somewhat brownèd face in milk:  
 I have a sister, a young tender thing,  
 To her I will prefer thee, a she-squire,  
 To brace her garments and to bleach her back  
 With sweet of almonds. A mere parrot thou,  
 Tiring her idle ear, and gaping for  
 An almond for thy pains. O thou dull snipe!

*Joseph.* This may be well, but it affects not me.

*Phrazanor.* O madam! do not fret—madam, I say!

*Joseph.* O peace! you pass all bounds of modesty.

*Phrazanor.* Pray write upon thy cap 'This is a man' —  
 A plague and the pink fever fall on thee!  
 I am thrown out—thou'st nettled me outright—  
 Who knocks there? wait awhile, the door is fast:—  
 Nay, stand thou here, I will not let thee pass."

It would be impertinent to remark on the marvellous grace and strength of all this—the subtle rapid changes of passion, the life and heat of blood in every verse, the sublime intense power of contempt which seems to make the written words bite and burn, the swift dramatic unison of so many sudden and sharp fancies of wrath with the aptest and most facile expression. Perhaps, however, the chief success is still behind; for after the return of Potiphar it must have been a labour of especial difficulty to keep up the scene at the same pitch. Nevertheless, the writer's power never flags or falls off for an instant, from the moment when Phrazanor turns from Joseph towards her returning husband—

"My injuries rejoice;  
I turn my back on thee as on the dead.  
—Ah! give me breath."

The picture of Joseph's fidelity is as fine as her  
invective:—

"Your trust was pure as silver, bright as a flame,  
Forged in your equity, finèd in your truth,  
Stubborn in honesty as stapled iron:  
Your charity was wise, like soaking rain  
That falleth in a famine on that ground  
That hath the seed locked up. So far, all honour.  
Your love and duty to my lord were like  
A mine of gold; but out, alas! the fault—  
You fell in twain like to a rotten plank  
When he was tempted in to count his wealth—  
There was no bottom to 't, he broke his neck.  
—Will *you* praise him, my honoured lord?

*Potiphar.*

Why so?

*Phraxanor.* Because he never must be praised again."

This is another of those instances of reserve which abound in Shakespeare only. Touches like these occur in Webster, but hardly in any third dramatist. Cyril Tourneur perhaps has hit here and there upon something of the same effect.

The hesitation of Potiphar to believe a charge so incongruous as that laid upon Joseph is admirably given; not less admirable is the explanation of Phraxanor, which if the space were larger might here be cited. Joseph's vindication of his father's honour from the taunts of both wife and husband is another noble and quotable passage; and the fierce brief inquisition of Phraxanor

which follows it is as dramatic as anything in the great preceding scene. We can spare space but for one more extract.

*Joseph.* If I did ever wrong thee in an act,

In thought, or in imagination,

May I never taste bread again. Oh God!

Try me not thus: my infirmity is love;

I can be dumb and suffer, but must speak

When there's a strife of love between two hearts.

*Phraxanor.* Ha, thou still wear'st thy heart upon thy tongue

And paint'st the raven white with cunning words:

Slave, thou art over-bold, because thou think'st

The grossness of thine outrage seals my lips:

But thou shalt be deceived; behold this chain:

Say, did it fall in twain of its own weight,

Or was it broken by thy violence?

Speak—liar.

[*She plucks him by the beard.*]

*Joseph.*

Madam, try rather at my heart.

*Potiphar.* Phraxanor, you forget your dignity.

*Phraxanor.* My lord, my indented lips still taste of his:

Myrah, bring water here and wash my hand—

It is offended by this leprous slave.

*Potiphar.* How dar'st thou do as thou hast been accused?

*Phraxanor.* Thou hast denied me; what hast thou to say?

*Phraxanor.* Put him to that; aye, let him answer that.

*Joseph.* I am like a simple dove within a net,

The more I strive, the faster I am bound.

My wit is plain and straight, not crooked craft;

The sight that reaches heaven tires in a lane.

*Phraxanor.* You will not answer; 'tis the strangest knave

I ever met or heard of in my time."

Baited thus, he turns upon her at last, and  
AVOWS—

"She would have tempted me, but I refused

To heap up pain on my so honoured lord.

*Phraaxanor.* Ha, ha! there is your steward, 'honoured lord'—

**His masterpiece of wit is shown at last.**

Ha, ha! I pray you now take no offence,

**But let him go, and slip your slight revenge.**

Now that the man is known I have no fear.

Thus cunning ever spoileth its own batch—

Doth it not, steward? Hold him still in trust—

**But for this fault he were a worthy man.**

. . . Steward, farewell;

For ever fare you well; and learn this truth—

## When women are disposed to wish you well

**Do not you trespass on their courtesy,**

**Lest in their deep resentment you lie drowned**

**As now you do in mine. I leave you, sir,**

**Without a single comfort in the world.**

[*Exit.*

*Joseph.* God is in heaven, madam! with your leave."

From this departure of Phraxonor to the end of the play, the interest of it is rather in the poet's power of workmanship than in the subject-matter; as indeed could not but be, taking into account the reaction which must follow on such scenes as those in the house of Potiphar. Here therefore we close our labour of extraction; although passages of excellent effect might be taken from any of the later scenes. The famine in Canaan, the triumphal procession of "the swart Pharaoh full of majesty," and finally the advent of Jacob, are all given with that admirable vigour proper to this great poet; and further stray lines and sentences of perfect worth might be picked out and strung together till half the book were transcribed.

This is no part of our task. By the specimens we have already brought in evidence it may now be judged how far this play, taken at its highest,



falls short of the world's chief dramatic achievements. What its author might have done had his genius found space to work in and students to work for, no one can say. It may be that only the supine and stertorous dullness of fashion and accident has kept out of sight a poet who was meant to take his place among the highest.

**VIII**

**JOHN NICHOL'S "HANNIBAL"**

**1872**



## JOHN NICHOL'S "HANNIBAL"<sup>1</sup>

**T**HE historic or epic drama, as perhaps we might more properly call it, is assuredly one of the hardest among the highest achievements of poetry. The mere scope or range of its aim is so vast, so various, so crossed and perplexed by diverse necessities and suggestions starting from different points of view, that the simple intellectual difficulty is enough to appal and repel any but the most laborious servants of the higher Muse; and to this is added the one supreme necessity of all—to vivify the whole mass of mere intellectual work with imaginative fire; to kindle and supple and invigorate with poetic blood and breath the inert limbs, the stark lips and empty veins of the naked subject: a task in which the sculptor who fails of himself to give his statue life will find no favouring god to help him by inspiration or infusion from without of an alien and miraculous vitality. In this case Pygmalion must look to himself for succour, and put his trust in no hand but his own.

There are two ways in which a poet may treat a historic subject: one, that of Marlowe and Shakespeare, in the fashion of a dramatic chronicle; one, that of the greatest of all later dramatists, who seizes on some point of historic tradition,

<sup>1</sup> *Hannibal: a Historical Drama.* By JOHN NICHOL. Glasgow: Maclehose. London: Macmillan.

*A Pilgrimage of Pleasure*

some character or event proper or possible to the time chosen, be it actual or ideal, and starting from this point takes his way at his will, and from this seed or kernel develops as it were by evolution the whole fabric of his poem. It would be hard to say which method of treatment requires the higher and the rarer faculty; to throw into poetic form and imbue with dramatic spirit the whole body of an age, the whole character of a great event or epoch, by continuous reproduction of historic circumstance and exposition of the recorded argument scene by scene; or to carve out of the huge block of history and chronicle some detached group of ideal figures, and give them such form and colour of imaginative life as may seem best to you. In some of the greatest plays of Victor Hugo there is hardly more than a nominal connection perceptible at first sight with historical character or circumstance. In *Marion de Lorme*, Richelieu is an omnipresent shadow, a spectral omnipotence; Mary Tudor was never convicted before any tribunal but the poet's of any warmer weakness than the religious faith which had heat enough only to consume other lives than her own in other flames than in those of illicit love; and Lucrezia Estense Borgia died peaceably in lawful childbed, in the fifteenth year of her fourth marriage. Nevertheless, these great works belong properly to the class of historical drama; they have in them the breath and spirit of the chosen age, and the life of their time informs the chosen types of ideal character. The Cromwell of Hugo,

in his strength and weakness, his evil and his good, is as actual and credible a human figure as the Cromwell of Carlyle, whether or not we accept as probable or possible matter of historic fact the alloy of baser metal which we here see mingled with the fine gold of heroic intellect and action. He who can lay hold of truth need fear no charge of falsehood in his free dealing with mere fact; and this first play of Hugo's, in my mind the most wonderful intellectual production of any poet on record at the age of twenty-five, is with all its license of invention and diversion of facts, an example throughout of perfect poetic truth and life.

It is to the former school—to the school founded, in his *Edward II.*, by the great father of English tragedy—that we have now to welcome the accession of a new and a worthy disciple. In this large and perilous field of work the labourers of any note or worth have been few indeed. Except for the one noble drama in which Ford has embodied a brief historic episode, the field has lain fallow from the age of Shakespeare to our own; and our own has produced but one workman equal to the task; for even the single attempt of Mr. Browning in the line of pure historic drama can hardly be counted as successful enough to rank with the master poem of Sir Henry Taylor. Nor indeed are we likely to see the work in this kind which for intellectual majesty and interest, for large and serene possession of character and event, for grasp and mastery of thought and action, may deserve to be matched against *Philip van Artevelde*. But

it is to the same class of "chronicle history," to use the Shakespearian term of definition, that Mr. Nichol's drama of *Hannibal* must properly be assigned. The daring and magnitude of the design would alone suffice to make it worthy of note, even were the success accomplished less real than we find it to be. The man who attempts in an age of idyllic poetry to write a heroic poem, or to write a dramatic poem in an age of analytic verse, deserves at least the credit due to him who sees and knows the best and highest, and strives to follow after it with all his heart and might. For the higher school of intellectual poetry must always of its nature be dramatic and heroic; these are assuredly the highest and the best things of art, and not the delicacies or intricacies of the idyllic or the analytic school of writing. The two chief masters of song are the dramatist and the lyricist; and in the higher lyric as well as in the higher drama the note sounded must have in it something of epic or heroic breath.

But we find here much more than breadth of scheme or courage of design to praise. The main career of *Hannibal* down to the battle of the Metaurus is traced scene after scene in large and vigorous outline; and for the action and reaction of dramatic intrigue we have the simpler epic interest of the harmonious succession of great separate events. Throughout the exposition of this vast subject, as act upon act of that heroic and tragic poem, the life of one man weighed against the world and found all but able to outweigh it,

is unrolled before us on the scroll of historic song, there is a high spirit and ardour of thought which sustains the scheme of the poet, and holds on steadily through all change of time and place, all diversity of incident and effect, toward the accomplishment of his general aim. The worth of a poem of this kind cannot of course be gauged by any choice of excerpts; if it could, that worth would be little indeed. For in this mixed kind of art something more and other than poetic fancy or even than high imagination is requisite for success; the prime necessity is that shaping force of intellect which can grasp and mould its subject without strain and without relaxation. This power of composition is here always notable. Simple as is the structure of a "chronicle history," it calls for no less exercise of this rare and noble gift than is needed for the manipulation of an elaborate plot or fiction. It is in this, the most important point of all, that we find the work done most deserving of our praise.

On a stage so vast and crowded, in a scheme embracing so many years and agents, the greater number of the multitudinous actors who figure in turn before us cannot of course be expected to show any marked degree of elaboration in the outline of their various lineaments; but however slight or swift in handling, the touch of the draughtsman is never indistinct or feeble; Roman and Carthaginian, wise man and unwise, heroic and unheroic, pass each on his way with some recognisable and rememberable sign of identity. Upon one figure



alone besides that of his hero the author has expended all his care and power. Of this one ideal character the conception is admirable, and worthy of the hand of a great poet; nor does the execution of the design fail, as it proceeds, to repay our hope and interest at starting. Here as elsewhere the requisite hurry of action and conflict of crowding circumstance forbid any subtle or elaborate analysis of detail; but in a few scenes and with a few strokes the figure of Fulvia stands before us complete. From the slight and straggling traditions of Hannibal's luxurious entanglement in Capua, Mr. Nichol has taken occasion to create a fresh and memorable type of character, and give colour and variety to the austere and martial action of his poem by an episode of no inharmonious passion. To no vulgar "harlot" such as Pliny speaks of has he permitted his hero to bow down. The revolted Roman maiden who casts her life into the arms of her country's enemy is a mistress not unworthy of Hannibal. From the first fiery glimpse of her active and passionate spirit to the last cry of triumph which acclaims the consummation of her love in death, we find no default or flaw in the noble conception of her creator. At her coming into the poem

"She makes a golden tumult in the house  
Like morning on the hills;"

and the resolute consistency which maintains and vindicates her passion and her freedom is throughout at once natural and heroic.

We have not time to enlarge further on the

scope or the details of the poem, on its merits of character and language, its qualities of thought and emotion. We will only refer, for one instance among others of clear and vigorous description, to the account of the passage of the Alps—

“peaks that rose in storm  
To hold the stars, or catch the morn, or keep  
The evening with a splendour of regret;

On dawn-swept heights the war-cry of the winds,  
The wet wrath round the steaming battlements,  
From which the sun leapt upward, like a sword  
Drawn from its scabbard;”

and for one example of not less simple or less forcible drawing of character, to the sketch of Archimedes, slain in the mid passion and possession of science; to which the homage here studiously paid by the dramatist who pauses on his rapid way to do it reverence will recall the honoured name of that father to whose memory the poem is inscribed. As an offering worthy of such a name, we receive with all welcome this latest accession to the English school of historic drama.



**IX**

**A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE WORKS OF  
ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE  
BY EDWARD J. O'BRIEN**



A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE WORKS OF  
ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE  
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N. B.—This bibliography aims to include a record of all important editions of Swinburne's books and also of all his contributions to periodical literature which have not been subsequently reprinted. It is hoped, but hardly expected, that this list is complete. At any rate, it is much more full than the bibliographies of Shepherd and Nicoll and Wise. For a more detailed description of bibliographical rarities, the reader is referred to the latter bibliography.—*E. J. O.*

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*A Pilgrimage of Pleasure*

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- (72). Note on a Question of the Hour. *The Athenæum*. June 16, 1877. p. 768.

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*Works of Algernon Charles Swinburne* 163

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- (79). *Note on a Passage of Shelley.* *The Athenæum.* Feb. 9, 1878. p. 188.  
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- (85). Mr. Swinburne's "Study of Shakespeare." The Academy. Jan. 10, 1880. Vol. xvii. p. 28.
- (86). Letter to the Editor. The Academy. July 3, 1880. Vol. xviii. p. 9.
- (87). On a Passage in Lord Beaconsfield's "Endymion." (In French.) The Pall Mall Gazette. Dec. 6, 1880.

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- (88). Mr. Swinburne's New Volume. The Academy. Jan. 15, 1881. Vol. xix. p. 46.
- (89). Thomas Carlyle. (In French.) Le Rappel. Paris. 19 Fevrier, 1881.
- (90). Seven Years Old. (Poem.) The Athenæum. Aug. 20, 1881. pp. 238-239.
- (91). Disgust: A Dramatic Monologue. Fortnightly Review. n. s. vol. xxx. pp. 715-717. December, 1881.  
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- (92). Mary Stuart. A Tragedy. By Algernon Charles Swinburne. London: Chatto and Windus. 1881.

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*Works of Algernon Charles Swinburne* 165

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- (106). *The Best Hundred Books*. (Two letters.) *The Pall Mall Gazette*. Jan. 26, 27, 1886.
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- (111). *Thomas Middleton. Plays*. Edited by Havelock Ellis. With an introduction by Algernon Charles Swinburne. London: Vizetelly and Co. 1887.
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*Works of Algernon Charles Swinburne* 167

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- (115). Fine Passages in Verse and Prose: Selected by Living Men of Letters. Fortnightly Review. I. August, 1887, n. s. vol. xlii. pp. 297-316. II. September, 1887. n. s. vol. xlii. pp. 430-454.  
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- (116). A Retrospect. (Letter to *The Times*.) The Times. May 6, 1887. p. 4. col. 5.
- (117). Unionism and Crime. The St. James's Gazette. May 6, 1887. p. 5.
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*Works of Algernon Charles Swinburne* 169

- (130). The Ballad of Truthful Charles. The St. James's Gazette. vol. xix. No. 2844. July 18, 1889. p. 7.

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- (135). Social Verse. The Forum. vol. xii. pp. 169-185. October, 1891. (Reprinted in The Forum. Vol. xliii. pp. 129-144. February, 1910.)

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*The poem has not been reprinted.*

- (141). Grace Darling. By Algernon Charles Swinburne. London: Printed only for Private Circulation. 1893.
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- (143). Astrophel and Other Poems. By Algernon Charles Swinburne. London: Chatto and Windus. 1894.
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- (145). Félise: A Book of Lyrics. Chosen from the Works of Algernon Charles Swinburne. Portland: T. B. Mosher. 1894.

*This volume contains work hitherto uncollected.*

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- (146). Laus Veneris. Poème de Swinburne tra-

*Works of 'Algernon Charles Swinburne* 171

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*Reprints various fragments otherwise practically inaccessible.*

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*Works of Algernon Charles Swinburne* 178

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- (166). The Age of Shakespeare. By Algernon Charles Swinburne. London: Chatto and Windus. 1908.
- (167). The Duke of Gandia. By Algernon Charles Swinburne. London: Chatto and Windus. 1908.

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- (168). Three Plays of Shakespeare. By Algernon Charles Swinburne. New York and London: Harper and Bros. 1909.
- (169). Shakespeare. By Algernon Charles Swinburne. London: Henry Frowde. 1909.
- (170). The Marriage of Mona Lisa. By Algernon Charles Swinburne. London: Pri-

vately Printed for Thomas J. Wise.  
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*Seven copies printed.*

(171). *The Portrait*. By Algernon Charles Swinburne. London: Privately Printed for Thomas J. Wise. 1909.

(172). *The Chronicle of Fredegond*. By Algernon Charles Swinburne. London: Privately Printed for Thomas J. Wise. 1909.

(173). *Margaret*. By Algernon Charles Swinburne. London: Privately Printed for Thomas J. Wise. 1909.

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(175). *Lord Soules*. By Algernon Charles Swinburne. With a Preface by Theodore Watts-Dunton. London: Privately Printed for Thomas J. Wise. 1909.

*Seven copies printed.*

(176). *Border Ballads*. By Algernon Charles Swinburne. London: Privately Printed for Thomas J. Wise. 1909.

(177). *To W. T. W. D.* (Written upon the Fly-leaf of a copy of "Sympathy and Other Poems," by S. J. Pratt: 8vo. 1807.) London: Privately Printed for Thomas J. Wise. 1909.

*Twenty copies printed.*

1909

- (178). *In the Twilight*. Poem by Algernon Charles Swinburne. London: Privately Printed for T. J. Wise. 1909.

*Only ten copies printed. Written in 1867.*

- (179). *Burd Margaret*. A Ballad by a Borderer. By Algernon Charles Swinburne. London: Privately Printed for T. J. Wise. 1909.

*Twenty copies printed.*

- (180). *The Portrait*. By Algernon Charles Swinburne. With an Introduction by Theodore Watts-Dunton. London: Privately Printed for T. J. Wise. 1909.

*Twenty copies printed of this prose romance.*

- (181). *The Chronicle of Queen Fredegond*. By Algernon Charles Swinburne. London: Privately Printed for T. J. Wise. 1909.

*Twenty copies printed of this prose romance.*

- (182). *Border Ballads*. By Algernon Charles Swinburne. London: Privately Printed for T. J. Wise. 1909.

*Includes Three Ballads: "Earl Robert," "Duriesdyke," and "Westland Well." Twenty copies printed.*

- (183). *Letters to T. J. Wise*. By Algernon Charles Swinburne. London: Privately printed for T. J. Wise. 1909.

*A Pilgrimage of Pleasure*

*Twenty copies printed. Includes an Unpublished Song From a Cancelled Passage in "Chastelard."*

- (184). Ode to Mazzini. By Algernon Charles Swinburne. London: Privately printed for T. J. Wise. 1909.

*Twenty copies printed. Probably written in 1857.*

- (185). M. Prudhomme at the International Exhibition. By Algernon Charles Swinburne. With a Preface by Edmund Gosse. London: Privately printed for T. J. Wise. 1909.

*Twenty copies of this prose essay printed. Written in 1862.*

- (186). Of Liberty and Loyalty. By Algernon Charles Swinburne. With a Preface by Edmund Gosse. London: Privately Printed for T. J. Wise. 1909.

*Twenty copies of this prose essay printed. Written in 1866.*

- (187). The Saviour of Society. Two Sonnets and a Controversy. By Algernon Charles Swinburne. With a Preface by Edmund Gosse. London: Privately Printed for T. J. Wise. 1909.

*Twenty Copies Printed. The Sonnets are reprinted from the Examiner of May 17, 1873, and several letters are also reprinted from the Examiner and Spectator. The sonnets and letters are all listed above, 9.v.*

*Works of Algernon Charles Swinburne 177*

- (188). *The Worm of Spindlestoneheugh. A Ballad by a Borderer.* By Algernon Charles Swinburne. With a Preface by Edmund Gosse. London: Privately Printed for T. J. Wise. 1909.

*Twenty Copies Printed.*

- (189). *Letters on the Works of George Chapman.* By Algernon Charles Swinburne. With a Preface by Edmund Gosse. London: Privately Printed for T. J. Wise. 1909.

*Letters to Richard Herne Shepherd.*

*Twenty copies printed.*

- (190). *From Literary London. (Special Correspondence of the Dial.)* By Clement K. Shorter. *The Dial.* December 16, 1909. Vol. xlvii. pp. 504-505.

*Includes two hitherto unpublished poems by Swinburne.*

1910

- (191). *The Ballade of Villon and Fat Madge.* By Algernon Charles Swinburne. With a Preface by Edmund Gosse. London: Privately printed for T. J. Wise. 1910.

*Twenty copies printed.*

- (192). *A Criminal Case. A Sketch* by Algernon Charles Swinburne. London: Privately Printed for T. J. Wise. 1910.

*Twenty copies of this prose tale printed.*

- (193). *A Record of Friendship.* By Algernon

*A Pilgrimage of Pleasure*

Charles Swinburne. London: Privately Printed for T. J. Wise. 1910.

*Recollections of Rossetti. Written in 1882. Twenty copies printed.*

- (194). *The Ballade of Truthful Charles and Other Poems.* By Algernon Charles Swinburne. London: Privately printed for T. J. Wise. 1910.

*Ten poems, nine of which appeared previously in periodicals, and are listed above. Twenty copies printed.*

- (195). *Letters on William Morris, Omar Khayyam, and Other Subjects of Interest.* By Algernon Charles Swinburne. London: Privately Printed for T. J. Wise. 1910.

*Twenty copies of these nine letters printed.*

- (196). *Letters Chiefly Concerning Edgar Allan Poe.* By Algernon Charles Swinburne. With a Preface by John H. Ingram. London: Privately Printed for T. J. Wise. 1910.

*Twenty copies printed of these eleven letters to John H. Ingram.*

- (197). *Letters on the Elizabethan Dramatists.* By Algernon Charles Swinburne. With a Preface and Notes by Edmund Gosse. London: Privately Printed for T. J. Wise. 1910.

*Twenty copies printed of these ten letters to A. H. Bullen.*

*Works of Algernon Charles Swinburne* 179

- (198). Letters to Thomas Purnell and Other Correspondents. By Algernon Charles Swinburne. London: Privately Printed for T. J. Wise. 1910.

*Twenty copies printed of these ten letters addressed to Thomas Purnell, A. H. Bullen, and Philip Bourke Marston.*

- (199). Letters to A. H. Bullen. By Algernon Charles Swinburne. London: Privately Printed for T. J. Wise. 1910.

*Twenty copies of these sixteen letters printed.*

- (200). Letters to John Churton Collins. By Algernon Charles Swinburne. With a Preface by Edmund Gosse. London: Privately Printed for T. J. Wise. 1910.

*Twenty copies of these twelve letters printed.*

- (201). Letters to Edmund Gosse. Series I. 1867-1875. By Algernon Charles Swinburne. With a Preface by Edmund Gosse. London: Privately printed for T. J. Wise. 1910.

*Twenty copies of these ten letters printed.*

- (202). The Earlier Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher. The North American Review. May, 1910. Vol. cxc. pp. 612-625.

1911

- (203). Letters to Edmund Gosse. Series II. 1876-1877. By Algernon Charles Swin-



burne. London: Privately Printed for T. J. Wise. 1911.

*Twenty copies of these seventeen letters printed.*

- (204). Letters to Edmund Gosse. Series III. 1878-1880. By Algernon Charles Swinburne. London: Privately Printed for T. J. Wise. 1911.

*Twenty copies of these twelve letters printed.*

- (205). Letters to Edmund Gosse. Series IV. 1881-1885. By Algernon Charles Swinburne. London: Privately Printed for T. J. Wise. 1911.

*Twenty copies of these eighteen letters printed.*

- (206). Letters to Edmund Gosse. Series V. 1886-1907. By Algernon Charles Swinburne. London: Privately Printed for T. J. Wise. 1911.

*Twenty copies of these nineteen letters printed. For a description of this and the other pamphlets printed by Thomas J. Wise, I am indebted to Mr. Clement K. Shorter's article in the Dial listed above, and especially to Mr. George H. Sargent's check-list published in the Boston Evening Transcript, March, 1913.*

1913.

- (207). Vera: A Play in MS.

- (208). Border Ballads by Algernon Charles Swin-

*Works of Algernon Charles Swinburne* 181

burne. Edited by T. J. Wise. Boston: Bibliophile Society. 1918.

- (209). *A Pilgrimage of Pleasure: Essays and Studies* by Algernon Charles Swinburne. With a Bibliography by Edward J. O'Brien. Boston: Richard G. Badger. 1918.











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